

THE BIBLE IN SCHOOL

A QUESTION OF ETHICS

BY

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for London)*

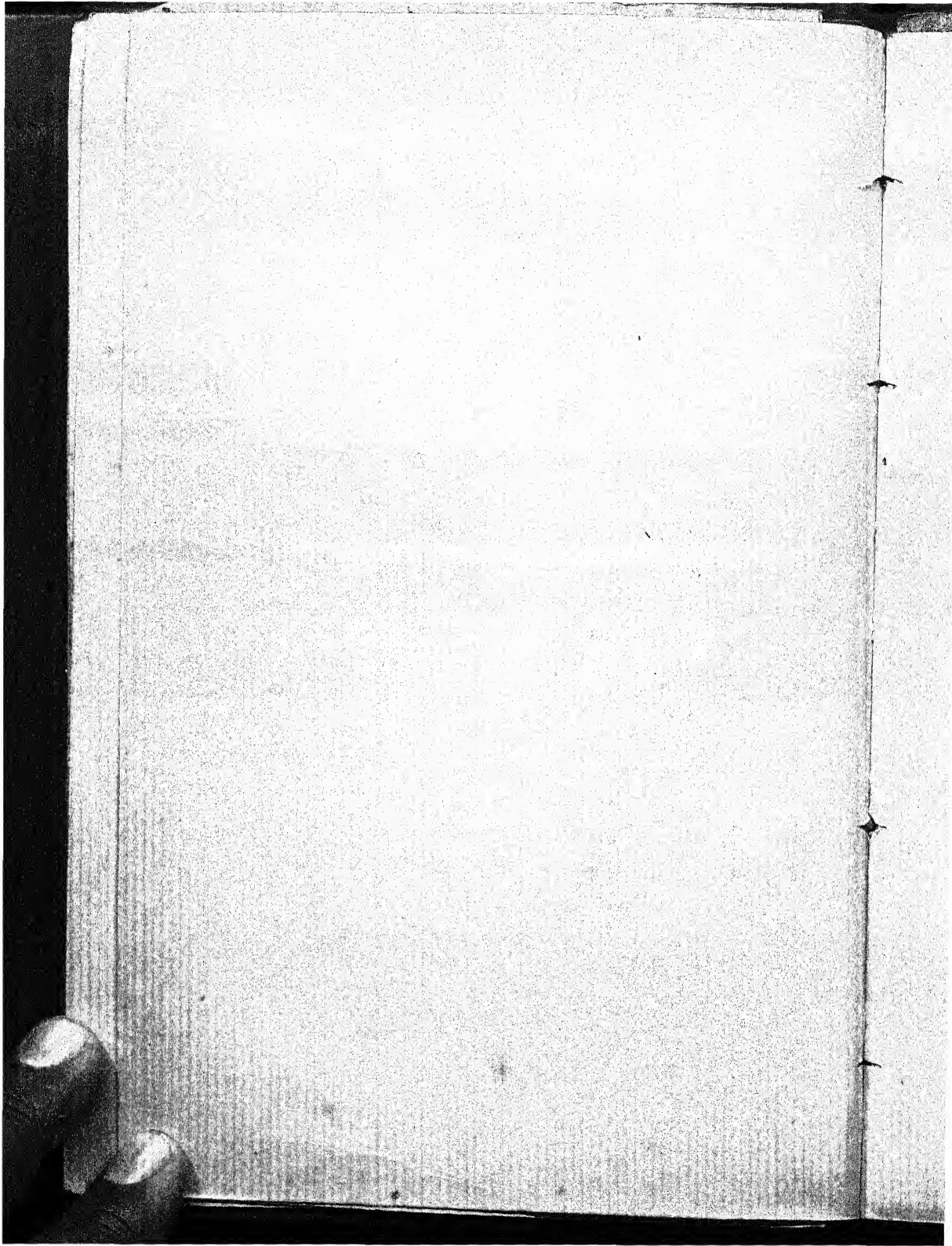
[ISSUED BY THE RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, LIMITED]

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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PREFACE

THIRTY years ago, in 1871, when the first School Board for London accepted, with a close approach to unanimity, the well-known resolution proposed by the late Right Hon. W. H. Smith, M.P., in favour of Bible teaching in the schools, there was a small minority of three who recorded their votes against it. Not one of these three was insensible of the value and importance of the Bible in the education of humanity. On the contrary, they had a reverence for it which was certainly not shared by some of those who voted for the motion. Indeed, two of them had devoted their whole energies up to that date to the work of religious instruction. The first of the three was the Rev. Benjamin Waugh, whose name is now known and honoured throughout the world for the salvation he has brought to tens of thousands of suffering children. The second was the late Mr. Chatfeild Clarke, a sincerely religious Unitarian. The third was the writer of the following pages.

Few, if any, would like to confess that they have passed through thirty years of experience without changing an opinion; and I hope I have changed many opinions for the better. But all that I have observed in the course of many imperfect labours in the field of education has only confirmed the conviction expressed by that vote; the conviction that we should have better served the interests of religion as well as of education if we had acted on the judgment of the older Nonconformists, that the Bible is not a proper subject for State patronage and control. In so doing we should only have followed the example set us by those States of Greater Britain whose eyes discern the future more surely than ours.

J. A. P.

October, 1901

I.

THE BIBLE SPHINX

THE problem of the right use of the Bible in the nation's schools is a question of morality quite as much as of religion. Yes, say the advocates of its indiscriminate use, it is a question of morality, because you can have no morality without religion, and no religion without the Bible. Without stopping now to argue either of the points thus raised, I may remind the holders of such opinions that some noteworthy men of their persuasion have made these very points a reason for objecting to the indiscriminate use of the Bible in the schools; and by the phrase "indiscriminate use" I mean placing it in the hands of every teacher, whether Catholic, Evangelical, or Rationalist, to give to the children of believers and unbelievers alike explanations and instruction therefrom in the principles of the Christian religion and of morality.¹ The late Edward Miall represented many thousands of Non-conformists, besides himself, when he held out for long against national elementary education on the ground that it would be impossible to exclude the Bible, and that the Bible could not be properly taught by unspiritual, still less by unsympathetic or unbelieving,

¹ Article 200 of the Code of Regulations of the School Board for London. The words are part of the famous resolution carried by the late Mr. W. H. Smith. But the epithet, "the Christian," is a later insertion.

persons. Precisely because in their view no morality was possible without religion, and religion meant to them the Bible as a divine revelation, they insisted that the Book was too sacred a thing for indiscriminate use in the sense defined above; and, therefore, they dreaded the merging of their voluntary schools in a State system.

Later, when it was becoming clear that a comprehensive national scheme was inevitable, some of the most earnestly religious among the Nonconformists—such as the Rev. Edward Baynes and the late Dr. Samuel Davidson—thought the difficulty might be evaded by confining State or municipal schools to “secular” subjects, and leaving to the churches the responsibility for supplementing by religious instruction this confessedly imperfect training.

I do not know that I can give a better illustration of the views then held by many of the most devout Nonconformists than a quotation from a speech delivered in 1850 by my father, the late Sir James A. Picton, who was born and brought up amongst the Wesleyans, and was thoroughly evangelical in his belief. At a meeting summoned by several influential men in Liverpool, to petition Parliament in favour of secular education, he moved the following resolution: “That, in order that the rights of conscience may be effectually secured, it should be a fundamental rule that nothing should be taught in any of the schools which favours the peculiar tenets of any religious sect or denomination.” But the speaker did not see in these words any suggestion of the future “compromise.” He believed that, to avoid tenets peculiar to a part only of the nation, it would be necessary to confine instruction to secular subjects. At the outset

he referred to an article reprinted from the Nonconformist newspaper which then opposed any rate-aided education. He said :—

“ The article is headed ‘Wanted a Foundation’—a very appropriate heading doubtless; for arguments more baseless, and objections of a more flimsy character, it has not often been my lot to peruse. The gist of the argument is this: that because there are some things in which it would be wrong for the community or State to interfere, therefore the community should interfere in none, but should leave everything to be effected by voluntary effort....Is the illumination of our streets to be considered all-important, and is the lighting-up of the lamp of knowledge in the souls of darkened millions to be deemed matter of no concern to the community as such?....If it be right to provide a library, it cannot be wrong to teach to read; if it be just in principle for the State to provide the means of intellectual gratification, it cannot be unjust to afford the necessary preparation for its enjoyment....The object to be attained is the communication of that knowledge which shall fit a man to understand his social duties and duly to perform his part in relation to this world. This is common ground on which all can meet, and beyond this the community has no right to proceed. Religious liberty should be absolute, or it is worthless. There cannot justly exist any modification of it. The rights of conscience must be held paramount to all mere human laws....The practicability of the system of education which we advocate has already been proved with the most complete success in the New England States of America....But this system is called irreligious, godless, and inimical to religion. Could I bring my mind to this conclusion, I should regard the system with the utmost abhorrence. I have been engaged as a Sunday-school teacher for the last twenty-five years, in attempting to communicate religious instruction to the young, and sooner would I consent to this right arm being severed from my body than it should be upheld in the support of any project adverse to religious truth. It is because I consider this system most favourable to religious teaching that I give it my warmest support. Let us look at the question fairly.....A newspaper is not of necessity irreligious, unless it contain a theological treatise or a sermon. The utmost that can fairly be said is that secular teaching is incomplete; but it is good as far as it goes. Now what have religious teachers principally to contend with?....Not so much, I will take upon myself to say, the actual prevalence of vice in the young as a degree of mental apathy or brutal ignorance, to remove which (in Sunday-schools) often involves a most serious waste of time and labour....A system,

therefore, which should remove this obstacle, so far from being unfriendly to religion, ought to be looked on as its most powerful auxiliary. But again the communication of religious instruction¹ requires a different mode of treatment from secular instruction. In the latter some degree of coercion is absolutely necessary, and the attempt to combine the two in simultaneous instruction is too often nominal rather than real, a profession rather than a practice. The element of religion should be love; its teaching should be the voluntary effusion of a devoted heart. The affections of the young should be called into play, and everything should partake of the gentle and healing influences of Him who 'spake as never man spake.' In thus enlightening the minds of the young, and fitting them for the reception of religious truth, I believe we are acting in accordance with the precepts of the divine Redeemer, who instructed his disciples to 'render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'

"No patriotic mind can look abroad on the heaving masses of life around us increasing daily in consciousness of strength, without some degree of apprehension arising, not from the character of our countrymen's hearts, but from the ignorance and darkness of their minds. The heart of the Englishman still swells with the same generous and manly emotions as it has ever done. The same hatred of oppression, the same love of order, the same sense of justice and right, still form the leading features of his character. But he is dark and longs for light. Shall it not be given him? He thirsts for knowledge. Shall not its refreshing streams be poured into his soul? Justice, kindness, safety, patriotism, all answer yes! 'Wisdom and knowledge must be the stability of our times; then may we hope that the fear of the Lord will be our treasure.'"

Justice and patriotism may have answered "Yes," but sectarianism answered "No." And in the sequel it was seen that the latter voice was, unfortunately, more potent than was expected by such guileless prophets as the speaker.

Of course, such a proposal as the above was open to obvious criticism, on account of its suggested

¹ What the speaker had in his mind was not the teaching of Jewish history, which of course, if sincerity were allowed, might be communicated as easily as Greek or Roman myths, but rather the conveyance of "grace and truth."

separation of things inseparable. But many advocates of so-called "secular" schools were quite as well aware as their critics that the distinction between things sacred and secular is purely arbitrary. They knew that a religion of daily life—of reverence, of devotion, of enthusiasm for good—was worth more than all the rules of arithmetic, but that it might, and would be, taught, or rather inspired, by a good man or good woman even in the process of teaching those rules. They could not, however, quite see how it was possible for such a religion of daily life to be naturally or effectively taught in a course of Bible lessons wherein the good man or good woman was forced to tell lies. And this they held must be the result in a good many instances if teachers were accepted without any profession of creed, but expected to teach the average creed of the nation, whether they believed it or not.¹

¹ The following observations by a man from whom I should have expected something different, Mr. Frederick Rogers, occurred in a descriptive article written by him on the Trades Union Congress at Swansea for the *Westminster Gazette* of September 9th, 1901: "The Cockerton judgment and the Government action are rousing the workmen, and not before it was time. With a better organisation of sub-committees this year, the numerous resolutions were made into one, and this affirmed that all grades of education should, in districts of suitable size, be put under one local authority, that more free scholarships should be available, that adequate provision for the representation of labour on the Board should exist, and that training colleges and schools alike should be 'free from unsectarian bias.' For the first time, too, in Congress, the demand for secular education disappeared. The truth is, the cry for secular education has represented a reaction rather than a conviction, and the secularist in education is gradually getting found out. He has descended in a direct line from Mr. Gradgrind of Coketown, and his influence where it has had full sway has been in education pretty much what that worthy's was in social life." The assumption that morality, if taught apart from superstition, must necessarily be materialistic, is scarcely worthy of the writer. He would say, of course, that School-Board religion is not superstition. But suppose it appears so to any considerable number of teachers required to teach it? what then? (See p. 53.)

Now, this difficulty might be avoided in one of three ways—either by allowing every teacher to use the Bible just as he would any other book, and to say of it precisely what he felt, just as he would about the *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Paradise Lost*; or, secondly, by allowing only the use of an authorised selection of Bible extracts illustrating the beauty of goodness; or, finally, as suggested by the so-called "Secularists," by keeping the Bible out altogether. The first solution is, of course, abstractly the right one, and in five hundred years will probably be adopted. But, so long as any considerable section of the people regard the Bible as miraculous and infallible, that solution is impossible. And this should be remembered by liberal sentimentalists, who talk about the Bible as a "classic," which it would be vandalism to exclude from the schools. The second solution, the selection of non-controversial passages, was advocated by the late Professor Huxley. But when he realised his failure, and saw what came of it, he was candid enough to own that the third solution would have worked practically better than his.¹ Those who advocate this solution quite share the regret of liberal religionists that our great colonies and the United States have found it necessary generally to exclude or severely to limit in their primary schools the use of so precious an inheritance from great times of old. They would most of them even agree that the expedient is a humiliating one. But, then, they do not think that the humiliation attaches to those who would treat the Bible like any other book. They rather think it falls on those who persist in investing

In a conversation with myself.

it with unreal attributes, such as forbid truth and sincerity in using it.

The idea of a book absolutely without an error is now generally, even by most of the religious sects, regarded as a figment of the ages of ignorance. But, while the possibility of error is allowed, the admission of its actual presence is guarded and limited by considerations which have no relation whatever to evidence. It is, I believe, common now for schoolmasters who know anything of geology to explain to their pupils that in the Mosaic account of creation the word "day" does not mean twenty-four hours, but an indefinite period of time. Yet those teachers whose culture enables them to estimate the force of congruity in determining the meaning of words, whether in literature or law, must feel sure that the six-times repeated refrain, "The evening and the morning were the—day," determines beyond question the intention of the writer to picture an ordinary day of twenty-four hours. Such teachers may know that various ancient commentators have felt the need of a larger space of time for so majestic a work. But this does not affect the impression made on their common sense that when a man of Hebrew race wrote "evening and morning" he must certainly have had in his mind the ordinary Jewish mode of reckoning from sunset to sunset. If, therefore, he tells his young students of truth that the sacred writer meant thousands of ages when he wrote "days" this teacher knows in his heart of hearts that he is not speaking the truth required at the moment.

It does not in the least matter whether the view here taken as to the significance of "evening and morning" be correct or not. The point is that it

is conscientiously held by a large number of educated teachers who are required to teach the Bible to children as a divine and infallible book. And, of course, this special detail as to the meaning of the six days is only fixed upon for distinctness of illustration. But let us leave that detail, or suppose it obscured in a haze of generalities about the undeniable dignity and occasional sublimity of the Bible story of creation. From the "Broad Church" point of view we are told that, whatever may be the sacred writer's errors in science, no ancient myth, no poetic imagination of uninspired men, ever so nearly approximated to the actual facts of the earth's origin and development as recorded in the rocks. Be it so—at least, for the purpose of our present argument. Then let the teacher be free to tell this to his pupils; and, if he is a man who happens to know where the narrative came from, let him be free to tell his pupils further that it is a revised and improved edition of a story found inscribed on clay tablets among the ruins of Babylon.

Certainly, if he were allowed to take this course, he would be saved from much humiliating prevarication about the "firmament in the midst of the waters," "dividing the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament," and about the grass and herbs and fruit-trees which brought forth seeds and fruit before the sun was made, and about the creation of birds before the "creeping thing and beast of the earth." He might most honestly tell the children that, with all its mistakes, the first chapter of Genesis is a most precious and touching record of a devout soul's effort to find the secret of the world in God. But the

requirement that he shall set it forth as a direct revelation from the Creator of what he did before there was any man to see it is surely a sore strain on any morality in which truth has its proper place.

The conservators of a decaying creed, however, demur to any such freedom on the part of teachers. "We pay our rates," they say, "or we give our school subscriptions to have the Bible taught in its simplicity as the word of God. It would be an outrage on our conscience if teachers were allowed to treat it as a human book." And the advocates of a rate-aided Gospel in Board schools would add that it is not sectarian religion they want—not, for instance, the Independent theory of church government, nor Presbyterianism, nor infant baptism, nor any such high matters, but only the simple truths of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the Atonement, and immortality in heaven or hell, and salvation by the blood of Jesus. A good man whose notion of catholic comprehension is embodied in the Union of the Evangelical Free Churches cannot conceive that there is any touch of sectarianism in Board-school religion as thus defined. Perhaps he never meets with any one who does not hold the simple gospel composed of those doctrines. And if he hears that such eccentric heretics really do exist, he waves them out of sight with such phrases as "entirely exceptional" and "negligeable minority." Whether that answer to the conscientious plea raised by these heretics is in accordance with fact will be a question for our consideration later. Meantime I would only observe that the "Non-conformist conscience" has not always been content to measure its own rights by the size of the minority it represented. I am old enough to remember times

when the existence of even ten righteous men conscientiously objecting to pay their parish church rates, though there might be five hundred anxious to pay, was thought by good Nonconformists quite a sufficient reason for resistance, even at the cost of distraint or imprisonment.

While freely granting that in this preliminary statement of the issue there are involved many incidental points on which I can have no hope of sympathy from the majority, yet, if the substance of it be summarised, I do not see how it can be denied without contradiction of patent facts notorious to all. Who will dispute that on the relations of religion to moral instruction, and of the Bible to religion, discordant and irreconcilable opinions are held with equal intensity of conviction by many of the worthiest members of the commonwealth? But those differences are more than merely intellectual divergences. They touch on deepest faiths and inspiring hopes and infinite fears. They are the clash of mutually-contradictory oracles held by opponents in the debate to be the divinest utterance of their deepest and most real being. Indeed, the differences are such that, if the opinions of any one group are adopted as the law of the people's schools, all other citizens must suffer painful and dishonourable disabilities. No matter what may be the selection made, whether the opinions of Conformists or Nonconformists, of Catholics or Protestants, of Rationalists or of "unsectarian" Evangelicals, all the rest must endure what they regard as the perversion of the State's authority and resources to mischievous and demoralising uses. As ratepayers they must support out of their wages or wealth the

propagation into the new age of doctrines which they detest. As teachers they must either play the hypocrite or take an inferior position. As parents they must either acquiesce in the instillation into their children's tender minds of what to their parental affection seems dangerous poison, or, by availing themselves of the "Conscience Clause," they must inflict on their families the fate of little pariahs during all their school hours. As citizens they must submit to have the whole moral energy of the land they love devoted to immortalising errors which, according to their point of view, may be superstitious or godless, loose and latitudinarian, or promotive of priestcraft, as the case may be.

II.

RELIGIOUS EQUALITY

"RELIGIOUS equality" has too often been interpreted to mean equality of privilege for Christian sects. We have not yet outgrown the feeble tolerance of kindly Commonwealth Puritans who would extend the protection of the law to Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and even Quakers, but who would bore with a hot iron the tongue of a man who should openly deny Christianity. Modern sentiment, indeed, protects us from too close an imitation of seventeenth-century practice in this respect. But in the assumption that the claim to religious equality before the law is morally invalid in the case of Unitarians, Rationalists, Pantheists,¹ and Agnostics, the germ of the old cruelty still survives. Now that is just the assumption which has underlain all nineteenth-century discussion by liberal Christians of the rights of ultra-Rationalists,

¹ If I do not mention "Atheists," it is because I do not recognise the term as properly applicable to any actual form of belief or unbelief. I never met, nor do I expect ever to meet, a man who would deny that being is eternal. All the self-styled "Atheists" I have ever known have simply denied that my idea of God, or any other idea of God, answers to their notion of eternal being. I am bound to respect their negative attitude. But I should call it Agnosticism, not Atheism. When I find a man who positively denies that there is anything eternal, or, in other words, who thinks that at one moment—so to speak—in the infinite past there was nothing, and at the next moment there was everything, or "the promise and potency" of everything, I will allow him the name of Atheist. But I shall not feel bound to respect his intellect.

or disbelievers in any revelation made by a personal God.

The "Broad Churchman" repudiates with honest indignation any lingering desire to subject even the "Infidel" to secular pains and penalties on account of his unbelief. But he retains an equally honest conviction that the "Infidel," by his alleged voluntary alienation from the spiritual life of the Commonwealth, has forfeited any claim to equal consideration with Christians on any question affecting the establishment, endowment, or other public expression of the national religion. This description of the attitude of liberal Christians toward ultra-Rationalists can hardly be accused of exaggeration. Indeed, there are not a few amongst the former whose objection to the unrestricted citizenship of the "Infidel" is much more distinct. They say that he dishonours their God and Saviour, and that, though they hope his invincible ignorance may be leniently considered by the Supreme Judge, yet they cannot consent to involve the nation in moral peril by extending to him a "religious equality" inapplicable to irreligion.

It may be readily acknowledged that from this point of view the problem of religious equality raises issues far too vast to be adequately treated in connection with the right use of the Bible in the nation's schools. But it will presently be seen that, though we cannot help indicating those larger issues, we do not need to lose ourselves in them. For even if we grant, which I, for one, absolutely decline to do, that for the public expression or recognition of the nation's religious life the legal recognition of the Bible is desirable—as, for instance, in the Coronation service, and in swearing witnesses—yet every one must surely acknowledge that

if any particular public use of the Bible involves hypocrisy and lying, that use becomes a sacrilege, because, in theological language, it desecrates the vessels of the Temple by devoting them to the service of Satan. Now, precisely this is actually involved in the use of the Bible in schools according to the great Smith "compromise." Such an objection can only be met by asserting that the desecration is not inherent in the legal usage of the book, but in the infidelity or extreme rationalism of those who cannot use it aright. And this necessarily involves the corollary that none who are unable honestly to use the Bible in accordance with prevalent opinion ought to accept any office in which such use is required. Now that means practically the exclusion of all who cannot accept the residuum of Biblical belief common to Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and Methodists. The full justification of this assertion must be reserved for a later stage of the argument, when we come to discuss more particularly the position of teachers under the present order of things. Meanwhile I only assume that, if this be so, it raises the question of religious equality for Rationalists in a practical and limited form, such as need not carry us very far into the vast issues suggested above.

We need not, for instance, discuss the Broad Church idea that individual alienation from the spiritual life of the Commonwealth may justify the exclusion of that individual from entire religious equality. For obviously we have to do here, not with the spiritual life of the nation, but with the Biblical theories which a national school teacher is, as a matter of course, expected to hold and enforce. It is all very well to say that "theories" are not

expected, but practical teaching. But if the practical point be the historical truth of the six days' creation, or of the conversation of Eve and the Serpent, or of the argument of Balaam's ass with its master, or the three days' lodging of Jonah in the belly of a whale, it is difficult to see how Biblical theory can be excluded from its bearing on the conscience of the teacher. Either the teacher holds that the accuracy of such narratives is guaranteed by an authority independent of historical evidence, or he does not. If he holds the former theory, he can, of course, honestly teach these stories as narratives of fact. But if he does not hold it, even the chance hints occasionally let fall in the secular history lessons of a theological training college for teachers are enough to convince him that of historical evidence for such stories there is not the faintest shadow of a shade. And unless he have a mind exceptionally impervious to the echoes of criticism in the air, he feels in his inmost soul that, however useful as parables or otherwise those old-world tales may be, they have no claim to be treated as historically true.

We are not, however, at this point concerned with the special difficulties of intelligent teachers. I have referred to the effect of historical lessons in training colleges only as suggestive of the far more pronounced scepticism pervading the wider circles of moderately-educated people, who are under less temptation to a biased judgment. And if I use the word "scepticism," I take it in its proper and original sense of an inquiring spirit. I do not say, and I do not believe, that more than one-tenth, if so many, of English-speaking people reject the idea of a divine revelation given them in the Bible. But I do

maintain, because the tone of our current literature of social conversation proves it, that the old matter-of-course assumption of the divinely-guaranteed historic accuracy of the Hexateuch, and the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, has entirely disappeared from all circles of tolerably well-educated society. No literary aspirant to the pages of our most eminently respectable monthly magazines has now the slightest hesitation in treating the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as a figment of the Great Sanhedrim, or of unsupported tradition. The popularity of the late Professor Huxley's controversial essays cannot be wholly explained by their brightness and vigour. Admiring readers might not go all lengths with him in his negative conclusions. But they were not revolted by his claim to treat the Bible on the common-sense principles that he applied to science; and even this extent of acquiescence involved an immense shifting of the foundations on which their ideas of cosmic and human origins, as well as of Judaism and Christianity, had hitherto rested.

Reference to one contemporary fact alone may save us a good deal of detail. Take the "Polychrome Bible," one of the most remarkable achievements of sacred scholarship that even this age can show. It is still far from completion, and no one need be surprised if so vast a work advances slowly under many difficulties. But its progress and its circulation give ample proof of the tendency amongst great Biblical scholars to conform their criticism of the sacred volume to the principles they would adopt in regard to any other book, and also of the appreciation with which such an effort is received by the Christian world. To describe it shortly, it is an edition of the

Hebrew Scriptures with a new translation, accompanied by brief pregnant notes and a very few pictorial illustrations. The feature from which it derives its name is the variegated colouring of the pages designed to show at a glance the various documents from which the Hebrew Scriptures, as we have them, are believed by the editors to have been compiled. The treatment is entirely and unreservedly free—as much so as if the subject were the Vedas or the Zendavesta. It is at the same time profoundly reverential, as is indeed most becoming whenever or wherever we study genuine records of man's struggle upwards from the passions of the brute to the eternal life. The result, however, is a version subversive of many, or indeed most, of our traditional ideas of the Bible. The translation, if it is correct, which, so far as my knowledge goes, I believe it generally is, would often make the evangelical interpretation of crucial passages obviously impossible.¹ The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is so entirely rejected that the earliest documents therein of any length and importance are attributed to the latter part of the ninth century B.C., while the narrative of creation in Genesis i. and Levitical regulations, long defended as Mosaic, if nothing else was, are regarded as the work of exiled Jews in Babylon about 500 B.C. The Prophecies of Isaiah are assigned to a number of sacred bards, amongst whom the Isaiah of former evangelical divines occupies a limited though luminous space. The Psalms are “the hymn book of the second Temple.” We are told that “it is not a question whether there be any post-exilic Psalms, but rather

¹ *E.g.*, Isaiah vii. 14, where for “virgin” we read “young woman.”

whether the Psalms contain any poems written before the exile."¹

Lest it should be supposed that I am setting up these editors as an infallible authority, I may say, in passing, that I am not myself inclined to accept their judgment as to the Psalms. But, in justification of such audacity on the part of a very imperfect Hebrew scholar, I could only urge the general analogy of literary history. So far as my reading goes, the highest poetic genius of a race is manifested in its period of growth, and not during its decay. If the reverse was the case with the Hebrews, it would be an anomaly so singular that I should like more proof of it than is given by the Polychrome Bible editors. My point, however, is not the amount of importance to be attributed to the scholarly judgment of the learned men responsible for this great work, but rather their representative position in the world of religious thought. Had they been condemned heretics, "aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel," it might be said that their views are exceptional and eccentric, at any rate of no value as evidence of the trend of opinion. But so far is this from being a correct description that the editors are all of them men of high position and some of distinguished fame in English, American, or German Universities, and in communion with national churches or other great and respected Christian denominations. The chief editor is Dr. Paul Haupt,

¹ Psalm lxxii., *e.g.*, so long considered to be a description of the reign of Christ, is regarded as an ode in honour of some Ptolemaic king of Egypt. This, however, is no reason why the devout soul should not apply it to the spiritual reign of Christ, of which, as an ideal, it is a beautiful description. But the devout soul should do this intelligently, with the full consciousness that it is a case of adaptation, and not of miraculous foresight, just as with a similar use of the fourth Eclogue of Virgil.

Professor of Hebrew and the cognate languages in the Johns Hopkins' University, Baltimore, and until 1889 Professor Extraordinarius of Assyriology in the University of Göttingen, Hanover. Isaiah has been edited by Dr. T. K. Cheyne, Canon of Rochester, and Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford. Exodus has been treated by Dr. Herbert E. Ryle, Hulsean Professor of Divinity and President of King's College, Cambridge; the Book of Numbers by Dr. J. A. Paterson, Professor at the Theological Seminary, Edinburgh; and Deuteronomy by Dr. George A. Smith, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis at the Free Church College, Glasgow. There is no need to give the rest of the thirty-eight names. With the exception of one Unitarian gentleman and two Jewish scholars, the three editors of two minor books, all of them would be recognised as official representatives of moderate orthodoxy in religion. Nor can it be said that theirs are voices crying in the wilderness. Before such a vast and unremunerative work could be begun a large sum of money—£25,000, I believe—was raised by members of American churches; and the sale, so far as the volumes have been issued, has been sufficient to prove an extensive demand among professedly Christian believers for literature of the kind.

The inference I ask to be allowed to draw from facts like this is not an extravagant one. It is not that the majority of the people in England or America have been converted to pure Rationalism, but only that it is unjust and absurd to say that the rejectors of the historical accuracy of the Bible are a negligible quantity, eccentric heretics, aliens from the spiritual life of their race, and therefore rightly

subjected to religious disabilities where questions of national education are concerned.

Probably many of my liberal religious readers will think that I have taken a great deal of unnecessary trouble to arrive at an obvious conclusion. Of course that is so, they will say; but where are the religious disabilities? My answer is that those disabilities are twofold—first, denial to them of the just rights of conscience; second, exclusion from honest and self-respecting service of the nation as teachers in its public schools. I grant that if they can consent to a colourable hypocrisy they are not excluded; but if any one holds that eligibility to appointment under such a condition constitutes religious equality, with him I will not argue. I was brought up in a different school, and I think it is a loss to the passing generation that the principles of that school are, for the moment, out of fashion.

III.

THE NEW CHURCH RATE

BEFORE the year 1870 the Nonconformists held that it is wrong, unjust, and even cruel, to make a man pay for the maintenance and spread of what he holds to be religious error. I am old-fashioned enough to be of the same opinion still. The sentimental generalities of "Broad Church" men, which appear singularly attractive to Nonconformist "perverts"—like the late Right Hon. W. E. Forster—have on this subject blurred the boundary lines of right and wrong in the minds of many influential men of Puritan traditions. Men like the late Edward Miall, they say, were wrong in assuming that there is a clear and straight-cut dividing-line between things "sacred" and "secular." They were wrong, also, in assuming that a national or municipal government ought of right to confine itself to a policy of water and gas, of sewage and sanitation. They were wrong, again, in conceiving of government as a corporate policeman, whose only duty is to keep individual citizens from wronging each other. If the life of a man should be treated as a whole, and not as a mosaic of religion, morality, business, and politics, so ought the life of a nation to be treated as a whole. From that point of view the business of a Government is to foster and co-ordinate all healthy forms of the national energy, whether ticketed as religious or secular, social

or commercial, æsthetic or practical, individual or collective. Nor is this reaction against "administrative nihilism" confined to Broad Churchmen and Non-conformists. It has generally the support of the Ethical Societies and their organs, amongst whose aims the substitution of non-theological ethics for religious instruction in the nation's schools is prominent. I do not understand, however, that the supporters of the Ethical Movement desire to make the denial of revelation a part of our school teaching, still less to extort rates from the pockets of devout evangelicals for the support of such teaching.

It is at this point that I find a limit to the generous theories of the State's function, which have so largely superseded that of the corporate policeman. There are, I believe, other limits; for many methods of social action derive all their charm and effectiveness from voluntary impulse, and are practically paralysed if this be superseded by law. But we are concerned at present only with the particular limit that comes into view when religion is touched. It was from this point of view only that the Nonconformist opponents of church rates could be justified. In extorting from them by force the support of transcendental¹ doctrines that they condemned, an indefensible wrong was done to their conscientious convictions. This has now been conceded to them. But most of the survivors of that struggle appear strangely blind to the bearing of their own arguments on the School Board rate, so far as it is spent on the present Bible teaching.

¹ I use this epithet to describe doctrines going beyond the sort of matter-of-fact evidence usually required for justice or legislation, and also outside the practical necessities of citizen life.

I am one of a school at present "everywhere spoken against," who, just because we prize the Bible highly, regret very much to see the venerable Book misused as it is in our schools. Its value to us consists not in any revelation, or any otherwise inaccessible information supposed to be found in its pages, but in the unrivalled power of spiritual and moral inspiration inherent in its noblest utterances. Through all our changes of opinion, surviving all denials forced on us by evidence and honesty, rising triumphantly from the scientific grave to which a dead creed has been committed, that power seems to us indestructible, immortal. We do not think of the Bible less; we think far more of it than when we believed in Eve's apple and Balaam's ass. For then it represented to us a series of violent dislocations of the order of nature. But now the Bible is to us an age-long vision of truth disentangling itself from error, of right slowly conquering wrong, of the emergence through the illusions and lies and sufferings and struggles and passions and aspirations of mankind of that more perfect state which, if the earth last long enough, must bless some future generation, and which, by its consummation of past, present, and future in one consciousness, may well be called the eternal life, or even "the fulness of the godhead bodily."

We think such a Book degraded to low uses when it is enthroned as a fetish, before which judgment and reason grovel in the dust of superstition. And we protest against being made to pay for such sacrilege. Indeed, the wrong done to conscience in our case is much more offensive than anything that could be alleged by our predecessors under church rates. For, after all, our evangelical fathers and grandfathers

agreed almost entirely with the religious and moral teaching of the Established Church. Their points of difference touched only ecclesiastical order and sacraments, which, however important in their view, could hardly be said to affect fundamental morality. But we, in these times, are forced to support a system which we not only suspect, but know by experience, to be utterly inconsistent with a cultivation of that "truth in the inward parts" which in the Bible itself the Eternal is said to require.

I am not so foolish as to hold that legal compulsion is necessarily barred the moment any plea of individual conscience is raised. I fully acknowledge also the difficulty of drawing a clear line between legitimate and illegitimate pleas of conscience. Nor is it essential to attempt it here. I confine myself to one class of cases in which it seems unjust and cruel to reject the plea. But I will offer one or two suggestions on the general question.

In matters on which public opinion is much divided by differences depending on sentiment rather than on evidence it is always dangerous for authority to be intolerant of conscience in recusants. Further, if the differences concern transcendental questions, with no immediate or obvious bearing on the practical life of the commonwealth, such intolerance is more than dangerous; it is wrong. For one need not be a fanatical "individualist" to hold that some inner sources of individual character and will are of priceless worth to the community, and should be held sacred in every man. Among these we may surely count the individual feeling of solitary responsibility to eternal Power for personal loyalty to its rule. Without this, indeed, we have no true

commonwealth at all. For any group of creatures who fulfil instinctively and unconsciously separate functions of convergent advantage to the whole of that group are more on the level of a hive than of a commonwealth. To this latter some intelligent consciousness of subordination to a common end is necessary, and this cannot be permanently secured without individual loyalty to a control higher than institutions and more comprehensive than the State. It was an inarticulate feeling of this truth which led the ancients to insist so much on religion as the sanction of patriotism. This also was what St. Paul had in mind when he said, perhaps too indiscriminately: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God..... Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake." But when the loyalties clashed St. Paul resolutely obeyed the higher. It has taken the rulers of this world a long time to find out that it is precisely such men who, if only their conscience be respected, make the best citizens. In fact, records of our own time—such as some of the proceedings under the so-called Blasphemy Laws, and also under the Church Discipline Acts—show that the lesson has not even yet been perfectly learned. But we have surely got so far that, if any wrong done to conscience is clearly made out, public opinion will insist on finding a remedy, lest so precious an inspiration as that of individual loyalty to truth and right should suffer sacrilege. My plea is that such a wrong is done by the present system of Bible instruction in public schools.

Before leaving this part of the subject, however, let

me try to show how such reasonable claims of the religious conscience as are here raised may be distinguished from perverse individual revolts against salutary State regulations. I will take the case of the self-styled "Peculiar People," a case by no means easy to deal with, but one which an advocate of conscience rights ought not to shirk. If I understand the position of these people rightly, it is their conscientious conviction that the Bible requires them in cases of sickness to depend on direct divine healing, without the intervention of a human physician. I am not competent to discuss the legal difficulties which thus arise. How far any man, whether a "peculiar" brother or not, can be compelled to ask and act on medical advice for his child, just as he is compelled to obtain "efficient instruction" for that child, I am not lawyer enough to say. He is not compelled to go to the schoolmaster for his child's instruction if he can ensure it in some other manner. It might be plausibly asked: Why, then, should he be compelled to go to the physician for medical aid if he can obtain it in some other manner? But "there is much virtue in an 'if.'" The legal view, or, at any rate, the common-sense view—which lawyers tell me is the same thing—is that the "if" here does in many cases introduce an impossible, and therefore unreal, alternative. What the law requires is that the parent shall do all within his power to prevent unnecessary suffering to his child, and still more to save its life. Whether he be rich or poor, it is within his power to obtain medical aid, and there are cases in which legal evidence can prove that medical aid, so far as human judgment can discern, would make all the difference between life and death. In such cases

"conscientious" objection to medical aid does not come under the conditions laid down above as defining the rights of conscience.¹ It may be, indeed, a case of false sentiment, but it is still more a stolid refusal of evidence. Transcendental doctrine may, indeed, be involved, and on that the parent may keep his own opinion. But sickness and healing are matters of physiology rather than of mysticism. They have a palpable and immediate bearing on the practical life of the commonwealth. Where this is the case, and where the requirement of medical aid is based upon an overwhelming consensus of experience and opinion, the community is abundantly justified in telling the recalcitrant parent to keep his scruples for the kingdom of heaven, and to render his due obedience to the kingdom of this world.

The conscientious objector to vaccination may claim to be in a different and a stronger position, not because his conscience is more sacred than that of the "Peculiar" person, but simply because there is not the same overwhelming consensus of experience and opinion to support compulsory vaccination as there is to support compulsory recourse to medical aid for serious illness. If experience had confirmed Jenner's assertion that one good vaccination would make the patient insusceptible to small-pox for the remainder of his life, the probability is that the question of compulsion would never have arisen. The popularity at one time of the far more dangerous system of inoculation shows how anxious people were to protect themselves. It is impossible to suppose that, if no cases of small-pox after vaccination had been

¹ See pp. 30-1.

known, such a marvellous preventive would have needed enforcement by fine or imprisonment. But if, contrary to probability, resistance had been encountered, a claim to exemption on conscientious grounds would have had small chance of sympathy in the face of such overwhelming proof of a palpable and obvious benefit to the practical life of the community. Even to the plea that a man might well be allowed to leave his own children unvaccinated, seeing that all others could, if they chose, be guaranteed by this infallible antidote against danger from his neglect, it might perhaps justly be replied that he would be exposing his own children to unnecessary danger and suffering contrary to the spirit of modern law. But all such arguments are annulled by the now notorious fact that the vaccinated sufferers from small-pox outnumber the unvaccinated in about the same proportion as the vaccinated bear to the unvaccinated in the whole population. If a man draws from this fact the conclusion that the alleged preventive makes no difference, but practically leaves things just as they would be were vaccination entirely abolished, I do not say that he would be unanswerable; but I do say that it is unjust to treat him as an obstinate fanatic or a traitor to society. This, in fact, is just what the recent law has recognised by excusing from compulsion all who, in proper form, make a declaration of conscientious objection. In other words, the case is authoritatively pronounced to be one in which the plea of conscience cannot justly be ignored.

I will take yet another case to elucidate the principle suggested above as a test of the rights of conscience. The other day I observed in the newspapers the report of a sale by legal order of certain goods

belonging to a worthy Quaker who had refused to pay his taxes because of the South African war. He would not voluntarily support bloodshed, and therefore took joyfully the spoiling of his goods. But, with all respect for one who is clearly a man of high character and strong individuality, I hold his plea to be entirely illegitimate. The maintenance of peace and the making of war both belong to the practical material life of the commonwealth. In such matters, if it is to act at all, it must act as a whole. There may be, and there nearly always is, division of opinion. But the majority determines the action, and it is carried out as the action of the whole. On no other conceivable plan could a *commonwealth* exist at all. This action as a whole, however, is only secured by the subordination of the wills and opinions of the minority to those of the majority. After doing all they can to secure that right counsels should prevail, the minority are no longer responsible in *foro conscientie*. To refuse at least passive obedience to the general voice in a matter strictly within the functions of a commonwealth would be to invalidate social order. Of course social order may sometimes be so bad that it ought to be invalidated. And in that case chaos must be endured for a while that a better order may succeed. But such extreme crises are very exceptional, and perhaps they never arise unless the commonwealth, or those who usurp its powers, have exceeded its functions of organising the practical, earthly (or, if we may use the word, secular) life. This happened in the seventeenth century in England, and it is the chronic state of things in Russia. But to say that the act of the community in making war can justify those who object to it in refusing to pay

taxes would be to declare any commonwealth impossible and to assert the principle of anarchism.

The conscientious objection felt by an increasing number of English people to be made to pay for the present Bible-teaching in the nation's schools is not open to any such condemnation. Such teaching cannot fairly be described as one of those public functions in which the commonwealth, if it act at all, must act as a whole. Indeed, so far as Board schools are concerned, such an assumption has been solemnly repudiated by Parliament in the Act of 1870. That Act does, indeed, forbid any "creed or formulary distinctive of any particular denomination"—a prohibition found perfectly consistent with strongly dogmatic teaching. But it does not require that there shall be any religious teaching at all. It throws the odium of persecution on the local authority. Even in the elementary schools of the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society the State now declines any responsibility for religion except so far as concerns the maintenance of the "Conscience Clause." It does not examine in religion, and it does not "inspect" religious instruction. It is clear, therefore, that in modern statecraft the support of religious teaching is not placed on a par with the maintenance of war, or with the provision of secular instruction as the duty of the whole commonwealth acting together. Further, it cannot reasonably be said in defence of Board-school practice that the infallibility of the Bible or its historic accuracy, or the transcendental doctrines taught from it, have a palpable or necessary bearing on the practical life of the nation. If, therefore, any Rationalist were moved by his conscience to refuse to pay his school rate

because it is applied to propagate "free church" dogmas, his conduct would certainly not be open to the same criticism as that of the conscientious Quaker mentioned above. And if the evangelical Nonconformists were right, as I presume they still think they were, in objecting to pay Church rates, they ought to realise the gross inconsistency of which they are guilty in compelling nonconformists to their creed to pay for teaching it. This is in flagrant contradiction to the doctrine of religious equality which, with stammering tongues, they still assert.¹

¹ Survivors, if there are any, of the noble army of "Church-rate martyrs" might ask why Rationalist nonconformity does not prove its sincerity by a similar martyrdom. It is a question of proportion. Unbelievers in supernatural religion have sometimes gone to prison, or suffered odious wrong in law courts, rather than play the hypocrite. But the devotion of part of a rate to a purpose they disapprove, while they heartily applaud the use of the greater part of it, hardly seems to justify martyrdom. The Church rate was devoted wholly to church uses. It would be scarcely becoming in the advocates of religious equality, as the right of a free-born Englishman, to urge that a man must have his goods distrained before he can fairly claim that right.

IV.

NEW RELIGIOUS DISABILITIES

Religious equality is also outraged by the exclusion of non-Evangelical Nonconformists from honest and self-respecting service of the nation in its public schools. This is a wrong which cannot, of course, be felt so widely as the last, because, naturally, those born with a vocation to teaching are a small minority. But where this particular form of injustice strikes it is felt with a special bitterness. And the number whom it affects is rapidly increasing. I do not mean merely that the number of silent protestants against the spiritual residuum constituting "School-Board religion" is increasing, but that the number among them who find either open or tacit hypocrisy intolerable is rapidly growing. In proportion as the impossibility of retaining the old beliefs becomes more widely felt the demand for relief from any pretence of believing them becomes more urgent. There has been a great change in the theology of the middle classes during the later years of the nineteenth century. Even so recently as the School Board era of 1870, the sharpness of the issue between the creed of the Evangelical Alliance and actual fact was not generally realised with anything like the same distinctness as now. The significance of Assyrian and Egyptian records had not been grasped except by a very few profound scholars. The

Tell Amarna Tablets, with their revelation of the condition of Palestine about the time assigned to the Mosaic exodus, had not been discovered. The inscription of Menephthah, recording a victory over certain "Israhili" in North Palestine, about the date when he was supposed to have been drowned in a mad pursuit of Israel through the Red Sea, was as yet unknown. So far as the spade had then recovered the past of sacred lands, it was believed that the correspondence of Egyptian, Assyrian, and Chaldean ceremonies and forms of worship with Biblical references confirmed the Scripture record; while the actual occurrence in inscriptions of names mentioned in the Old Testament was thought to have finally settled the question of its historical veracity. It is true that the epoch-making book of Darwin had been published eleven years before. But even among scientific men there was considerable hesitation in applying the theory of natural selection to man. And religious liberals who toyed with edged tools dwelt fondly on the absence of the "missing link."

While such was the state of popular knowledge and opinion, it was not difficult for conscientious teachers of the young to find relief in suspense of judgment. Members of a profession largely under clerical influence, and charged quite as much with the moral as with the intellectual training of their pupils, were naturally predisposed to believe that it was their duty in the meantime to go on teaching "divinity" as it had been taught to them. Comfort was found in the reflection that God's voice in nature and God's word in the Bible could not possibly contradict each other; and the meaning given to both terms remained so very vague that there was ample scope for temporary

accommodation. Even in cases where inconveniently definite questions were asked, it was always possible for instruction to disappear in a haze of reverence. "Do you think, sir, that we must take this literally?" asked a boy in a class studying the ass's argument with Balaam. "Such an occurrence," replied the master, "is so very remarkable, and, indeed, unparalleled, that in the present state of our knowledge I would rather not give an opinion. Perhaps there is some explanation of which we are not at present aware." So long as this kind of mental attitude remained possible the disabilities of doubt were not acutely felt. The supposed foundations of morality could be accepted as they stood, with an acknowledgment that their relation to the foundations of knowledge was an unsolved question.

But the state of things is very different now. The surrender of the historic accuracy of a large part of the Old Testament is so general that a very considerable number of teachers are conscious of a clear contradiction between what they are expected to teach and what they themselves believe. It is difficult to understand how an honest man can accept a position like that. In March, 1901, the "National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches," in its meetings at Cardiff, heard some plain speaking on this point from the Rev. Dr. Monro Gibson. It is true that his subject was that of Sunday-school teaching. But the principles he laid down are plainly applicable to all national schools in which the Bible is taught as a divine revelation.¹ And although

¹ The analogy between Board or "British" schools and Nonconformist Sunday-schools, so far as concerns religious instruction, is far closer than is commonly supposed. The effect of Mr. W. H.

no Board-school teacher is called upon to sign a creed or to make any profession of faith, he would not be allowed to give religious instruction if he did not assume this view of the Bible in all his lessons.¹ So far as the Bible is concerned, then, the words of Dr. Gibson have a clear bearing upon the position of Board-school teachers. He fully admitted that "within recent years difficulties had arisen on account of the change of view brought about in the minds of many Christians by the results, or supposed results, of recent investigations." He was quite willing to allow to Sunday-school teachers a latitude which experience shows to be impossible in Board schools. The sectarian equilibrium in the management of the latter is so exceedingly delicate that it can only be preserved by excluding from the lessons everything but what is held in common by the most conservative and orthodox sections of each evangelical denomination represented. On the other hand, liberal clergymen, like Dr. Gibson, can often secure a great deal of freedom to the teachers within their own communion. This must be remembered in applying the following observations to the case of Board schools, and accordingly the warnings must be interpreted more stringently. The italics are my own :—

They were confronted (said Dr. Gibson) with the difficult and

Smith's resolution of 1871 was, practically, to introduce into Board schools precisely the evangelical teaching given in common by Independents, Baptists, Wesleyans, and Presbyterians. So far was this carried that for some time the Catechism of the Evangelical Free Churches was actually adopted by the School Board for Liverpool and taught in its schools.

¹ The experience of Mr. F. J. Gould, the author of an excellent manual of Ethical teaching, and formerly an assistant master under the London Board, is decisive on this point.

delicate question as to what must be the attitude of our Sunday-schools towards this burning question of the day. It should be laid down as an axiom to start with *that only those who firmly believed in the divine authority of both Testaments had the right to be Sunday-school teachers at all.* (Cheers.) A man who had no message of God to declare, but only doubts of his own to ventilate, was quite out of place in the pulpit or in the chair of a teacher. Those who were themselves wandering in mist and darkness were no proper guides for others—least of all for the children. Most intelligent people, indeed, had doubts and difficulties in minor matters, so they could not expect their teachers to be all-round dogmatists, though even in the minor matters they should be careful not to parade their doubts. But if their doubts touched the great question whether God had really spoken to man and given Himself for our salvation, *then must the doubter be silent; or if he must speak, let it be under the banner of infidelity, not under the flag of Christ.* (Hear, hear.) *The teacher must be honest. If a teacher believed that the Pentateuch was a composite production, he must not teach his scholars that Moses wrote it all as his own original composition.* He took this as a simple illustration, which was none the worse in that it suggested the remark that a good Sunday-school teacher was likely to find something much better to do than to occupy his time with a matter which was of no spiritual value when there were so many urgent themes pressing for attention. (Cheers.) *A man must either teach what he believed or not teach at all.* (Hear, hear.) In the great majority of the lessons in the Old Testament, as well as the New, there need be no occasion whatever for raising any of these questions. One of the greatest dangers of our time was making far too much of the letter of Scripture and far too little of the spirit. What of those cases where a difficult question was sprung upon them? In that case he should consider it to be the teacher's duty to state what he considered to be the truth on the matter, but at the same time to intimate that this was a subject on which good Christians differed, and therefore it was a matter which was not essential, on which a person might think either this way or that without serious harm. It should, in fact, be treated as an open question. It was the dogmatism that did the mischief on both sides. Suppose he had the story of Eden to deal with, and had reached the record of the Fall, and a smart boy popped the question, "Was that a real serpent, teacher?" Now he maintained that, in the present state of opinion among good critics, it would be a grave fault to say either "yes" or "no." He should answer: "Some say yes, others say no; but it does not matter in the smallest degree to our great lesson of to-day which of them is right." But some might ask: "If you leave

such questions open, do you not unsettle the mind of the scholar?" His answer was that their minds ought to be unsettled on questions which were unsettled. (Hear, hear.) The settling of the mind on a question which was unsettled was most mischievous and in the highest degree dangerous for the future. Who could tell, for example, what dire mischief was done in the childhood of Professor Huxley by those who succeeded in settling in his mind that the Bible must teach science with the rigorous precision of the nineteenth century or be utterly discredited? No one could read intelligently Huxley's anti-Christian writings without seeing that his fierce antagonism to Christianity was determined by the fact that he was taught in his youth to regard as settled questions those which all intelligent Christians now treated as open or as settled in the opposite way. What had been rubbed into him from his earliest days was the mischievous dogma that, if there was a solitary inaccuracy in any reference which touched the domain of science in any of the books which made up the Bible, it was impossible to accept the Scripture as from God. If only the minds of men like Huxley and Tyndall had been unsettled on the question of the relation between science and inspiration, how different might the history of Christian thought have been in the last fifty years. He did not say they would have become Christians; that was not the result of an intellectual process, but the work of the Spirit. But they certainly would not have spent their strength in sowing broadcast the seeds of unbelief, and if they had not accepted Christ themselves they would, at all events, have looked with favour and not with deadly hostility on the truth. In guiding the steps of the young they should see to it first that they were leading them up and not down, and next that the steps were made easy to them, so that they might not stumble as they climbed.¹

It must be a very prejudiced mind which would fail to recognise and respect the moral and intellectual courage shown in these words from the occupant of an orthodox pulpit. But the conclusion of the report from which the above is an extract is even more instructive:—

Professor Rendel Harris (University lecturer in Palæography at Cambridge) opened the discussion. He said he thought that Dr. Gibson was a little in danger of sailing down the channel of "no

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, March 14th, 1901.

meaning" between "yes" and "no." As to the serpent mentioned in the Eden story, if he were asked he should at once say that it was mythical, and should be treated as such. (Oh.) When they were dealing with the educated sense of mankind they should not hesitate to speak out bravely, and face the question, and say: "Man is older than we thought him to be at one time." He asked them to appeal from the smaller Bible to the larger Bible of nature. They learnt from Genesis that Adam sewed together fig leaves. Well, the only fact they got there was that primitive man could sew. (Laughter.) If, however, they went into Kent's Cavern at Torquay, they would find the actual needle used by primitive man. That was much more convincing than any story, and he pressed upon them the importance of studying the Bible by the light of nature, and not nature by the light of the Bible.

During Professor Harris's speech many present dissented from his views. Having exhausted his time-limit, a vote was taken whether he should continue his speech. Several delegates voted against the motion, and Professor Harris said he had no intention to break the time-rule. (Laughter.)

The Rev. P. Williams (Derby) thought that Dr. Gibson ought to have dwelt longer on some of the important points, and not have passed over them by using catch phrases. They would like to have had a definition of the "Divine authority of Scripture" and the "human element in the Bible." They knew both were there, but still they wanted the matter defined so that other people might know they were there. (Cheers.)

Dr. Gibson, in reply, said he was bound by a time-limit, and could not, of course, deal with all questions in a single paper.

Now, if in a conference of "Free Churches," with no fear of ratepayers before their eyes, and no sacred "compromise" to maintain, it is so difficult to obtain a sanction for honesty in teaching the Bible, how much harder, indeed how impossible, must it be to secure it for teachers in schools whose directors represent a carefully-schemed balance of sectarian jealousies! The only possible expedient for maintaining an unreal appearance of agreement is to adhere strictly to such explanations as are not likely to be challenged by any section of evangelical believers. A paradoxical state of things thus arises. For while the liberty of teaching

is necessarily much narrower in Board schools than in Sunday schools under the liberal influence of clergymen like Dr. Monro Gibson, the area from which the teachers are, or may be, drawn is much wider in the former schools than in the latter, and nominally there is no imposition of any creed whatever.

Is this anomaly favourable to the honesty so earnestly insisted upon in the above extract? Obviously honest and self-respecting service in Board schools under the present system is made impossible to consistent Rationalists—nay, more, it is impossible to young men trained under liberal Christian influences and encouraged to accept the results of modern research, so far as these may appear consistent with the retention of belief in revelation. Suppose a young teacher entering school life with the teaching of Professor Rendel Harris fresh in his mind, and impressed with Dr. Gibson's manly exhortation not to teach what he does not believe. There is handed to him a "syllabus" of religious instruction in which "The Life of Abraham" is mentioned as a subject. To the younger children he may teach it as a story without saying whether he thinks it historical or not. Yet he cannot but be aware that his little pupils receive it as actual fact. That it would be possible to teach it otherwise is known to him by his experience of the effect produced when he indulges them with a fairy tale such as "Little Snowdrop" or "The King of the Golden River." The children are as much interested in these stories as though he had assured them they were actual facts. Yet they know quite well that it is not so. The stories belong to that wonderland where historic criticism never intrudes.

But when he relates to them "The Life of Abraham," including the divine demand for a human sacrifice, he is aware that they receive it as a statement of solemn fact, while at the same time he does not believe that it is so.

With the higher standards, containing children from twelve to fifteen years of age, the difficulty is much more serious. Encouraged by the liberty allowed him by clergymen such as Dr. Monro Gibson, he has yielded to arguments which convince him that the records of Abraham's life in Genesis are a composite production, showing an unsuccessful attempt to piece together a consistent whole out of discordant materials. Warned against dishonesty in teaching, he cannot tell his pupils that the narrative is guaranteed by the authorship of Moses. If among his scholars a prize-winner in the examinations of the Sunday School Union asks how it is that a precisely similar incident, arising out of a falsehood about a wife, is related twice of Abraham and once of Isaac, the same king being concerned at a considerable interval of time in two of the stories, what shall this honest follower of Dr. Monro Gibson say? If he says what in his own conviction is the truth, that the confusion arises through the unskilful patching of different materials, all of which are largely, if not wholly, mythical, there will be a disturbance at the School Board, and the teacher's career will be at an end. If he prevaricates, and says that it really does not matter, that in any case the moral lesson is the same, it is very doubtful whether this would satisfy the weak brethren on the School Board; but it would certainly be fatal to the teacher's own self-respect.

These observations are not in the least invalidated

by the suggestion that the opinions adopted by the teacher are possibly incorrect. From the point of view of religious equality in the nation's schools, such a suggestion is entirely inept. The consideration of consequence is that even Christian opinion, as represented by men like Dr. Monro Gibson, has now got the length of encouraging young people not to feel guilty of mortal sin if their reading convinces them of the composite and imperfect nature of "The Life of Abraham." And yet if they act on the declaration above quoted, that "a man must either teach what he believes or not teach at all," the second alternative alone is open to them. Even though they should have the genius of a Pestalozzi or a Froebel, they are excluded from the nation's schools, except on condition of open or tacit hypocrisy. If this is not religious inequality, and inequality of a shameful and odious kind, I do not know what can deserve the name.

Readers who keep pace with the times in matters of opinion, but are unfamiliar with the working of the School Board system, may perhaps be incredulous as to the existence of such a state of things as is here described. Is not the Board-school teaching "unsectarian"? they ask. The reply is that it is only so in the sense of teaching all that the "Evangelical Free Churches" hold in common. "Is not Bible teaching confined to necessary explanations in grammar, geography, and archæology?" No, it is not, as is clearly proved by the adoption, for a time, of the Free Church catechism by the Liverpool School Board.¹

¹ It is no answer to say that the answers on sacraments and church order were omitted. Of course they were. But to Nonconformists they are unimportant, compared with the body of divinity contained in the other answers.

By the Shrewsbury School Board the teaching of the Apostles' Creed was ordered, and is probably now continued. It has even been decided that this is not contrary to the Compromise. But, as this point is very important, and is also the subject of a very general misunderstanding, I will not content myself with these references, but will give more detailed evidence. In 1888 a voluminous Report was issued by the latest Royal Commissioners on Education. Among a great variety of interesting information it included an account of the religious instruction given in the elementary schools. I learn from this Report that Pulliblack's *Teachers' Handbook to the Bible* and Mr. M. F. Lloyd's *Abridged Bible Catechism* were being used in Board schools with the apparent approval of the Education Department. This fact shows what is meant by "unsectarian" teaching. Of Mr. Pulliblack's book I desire to say no more than that it assumes throughout the literal historical accuracy of the Old Testament, even of the early chapters of Genesis. Mr. Lloyd's *Catechism*, on the other hand, is an ingenious scheme to set forth the whole evangelical doctrine of the plan of salvation by contriving to furnish in the exact words of the Bible the answers to a number of leading questions. Thus, to the question, "What promise of a Saviour was made to our first parents?" the answer is, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." It is unnecessary to quote further. The assumption that the serpent-myth is actual history, that the serpent was Satan and the seed Christ, sufficiently shows how the plea of the Bible, and the Bible alone, may be made to support the

teaching under the name of unsectarian religion, beliefs abandoned by educated people and condemned by the spirit of the age. This should be borne in mind when we note the selections of Scripture made by School Boards for the teaching of children.

It appears that at the date of the Report—and I can find no evidence of any recent change—the Bible narratives of the Creation, of the Fall, of the Flood, and of Noah's exploits were considered to be specially suitable for the moral instruction of infants. They were prescribed for this purpose by the School Boards for Bolton, Manchester, Rochdale, Newport with St. Moollos, and many others. In Liverpool the book of Genesis was taken for the first year's course; but whether that included babies does not clearly appear. The School Board for London does not seem to have regarded those narratives as milk for babes, and its selections were much above the ordinary level. But in its prescription then, as now, of the "lives" of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as subjects for study, it certainly intended that they should be treated as historical, and this all teachers understand. The same remark may be made wherever a particular book or section of Scripture is prescribed by this or any other Board. Thus, under the Wanstead Board, the higher standards were set to study Joshua and Judges. It would be difficult to find in all literature two books more full of bloodshed, murder, massacre, and savagery of even more repulsive forms. I can appreciate as well as anyone the gleams of a higher life that flash from their pages here and there. And even the most shocking pictures they give of the ancient alliance between superstition and cruelty might conceivably be used by a teacher entrusted with

perfect "liberty of prophesying" to illustrate the depths out of which the evolution of reason and morality has raised us. But that is not allowed to Board-school teachers any more than to "sectarian" teachers. Indeed, the former are more tightly bound by the "Compromise." The Book says that God overthrew the walls of Jericho by a miracle, and that by his express and particular command the Israelites "utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and ass, with the edge of the sword." Now, if any teacher were to tell his pupils that the massacre might be historical, but that the allegation of a divine command was clearly false, there would undoubtedly be trouble at the next Board meeting, and probably at many others to follow.

The same may be said of the slaughter of Achan and his family, of the murder of the five kings at Makkedah, of the assassination of Eglon, of the treachery to Sisera, and a dozen other sanguinary deeds which, in reading Joshua and Judges, children are taught to regard as excepted by divine command from ordinary rules of morality. How can any educated man or woman read these sanguinary legends with their innocent pupils without hastening to assure the children that these are no words of God? It is not a case in which silence can appease the conscience. The absence of explanation or denial confirms the misbelief in young hearts that are forming their faith for life. If the truth cannot be told, at least let such horrible narratives be banished from the schools.

In dealing with the New Testament it might be thought that the course is clearer. When we find

selections from the life of Christ, or the story of the crucifixion and the resurrection, ordered to be taught, or the Acts, or St. Paul's Epistles, it might be thought that here at least the School-Board plan of "unsecularist" instruction can meet with no difficulty. I am not so sure of that. It is notorious that what is called "the Higher Criticism" has no more spared the New Testament than the Old. Moreover, the acceptance of the results of that criticism is not confined to "Secularist" lecturers, nor even to Unitarians. We have only to glance at the list of contributors to the new *Encyclopædia Biblica*, and at the opinions they support, to see that many scholarly Churchmen have entirely abandoned the literal truth of New Testament history, together with the authenticity of several epistles. I do not urge their ecclesiastical authority as conclusive against the Bible-instruction rate. But at least it helps to refute the arrogant assumption of Nonconformist perverts and others that School-Board religion represents the views of all but an eccentric negligible group of ratepayers. The rational desire to treat the New as well as the Old Testament like any other book is now supported by clergymen of the Church of England who repudiate even a literal belief in the physical resurrection of Christ. No one with an eye for the signs of this time can doubt that these clergymen represent the theology of the future. Nevertheless, any teacher who is now of that opinion can only gain employment in a Board school on condition of playing the hypocrite. Let it be clearly understood that what I am urging is not the permission to teach such opinions in the schools, but only the exclusion of a subject of instruction which, in the present chaotic condition of belief, imposes on many

of the best candidates for the office of teacher the cruel alternative of exclusion or insincerity.

If it be asked how such a paradoxical state of things as above described can have been established in the entire absence of any authoritative "creed or formula," the explanation lies in that spiritual cowardice of Nonconformists which the late Mr. W. E. Forster was shrewd enough to discern. His boast that he "would get over the religious difficulty in a canter" may be mythical; but it no doubt well describes his contempt for the alleged objection of Dissenters to "State patronage" of religion. He knew that it was limited to the State patronage of other people's religion. He knew that they would never dare to leave the propagation of the faith among children to that voluntary zeal under the inspiration of God's spirit which they said ought to satisfy Anglican and Catholic Churches. As a matter of fact, the creed of a Board school is like the creed of a "Free Church"—the consensus undefined in words, but very rigid in substance, of the opinions of supporters. And in School Boards the indifference of latitudinarians, anxious only for peace at any price, was a guarantee of the "compromise" thus arrived at.

But, whatever may be the explanation, there is the fact that, however clearly a young man is marked out as a born teacher, the rejection of evangelical theology, and in particular of the supernatural theory of the Bible, excludes him not only from the avowedly denominational schools, but from those very Board schools which are supposed to realise the ideal of democratic religious equality.

V.

MORAL EFFECT ON TEACHERS

It will be remembered that, in introducing the subject of the religious disabilities set up by School Boards, I carefully refrained from asserting that the barriers are absolutely impassable. All I alleged was that the tests implied, though not avowed, exclude Rationalists, whether Christian or non-Christian, from "honest and self-respecting service as teachers in the nation's schools." But they are, of course, not excluded from service of a different kind. As an illustration of the sort of service which latitudinarians or heretics are allowed to give, take the following extract from a letter printed in *Democracy* of February 23rd, 1901. The occasion of it was a previous letter from a Board-school teacher, complaining of the odious task of teaching what he did not believe, whereupon "Another Board School Teacher" addressed the editor thus:—

Sir,—The state of feeling disclosed by the remark of the "Board-school Teacher" anent the pressure put upon him to teach "Scripture" against his wish is, I am afraid, common to many others of that class of the community. One does lose a certain amount of self-respect in standing before a class and teaching for truth what one believes to be false. But, under somewhat similar circumstances, I ask myself: Why be honest? Why trouble at all about the matter? The Scripture lessons occupy little time, after all, and the harm done cannot amount to much. In view of the facts that all the work done in school may be described as an attempt to enable the children to conform to the canons of Christian or commercial morality (*sic*), and that no degree of conformity to those of either cult will abate the ills or conduce to

the welfare of humanity, I feel that more harm is done in the ordinary school work than in the time set apart for religious instruction. But one must get a living somehow; so I, personally, comply with the terms of my agreement with my employers, and let conscience go hang.

I will not do School Board teachers the injustice of accepting this gentleman as a fair representative of their moral tone. But my own experience, and a fairly extensive intercourse with them during many years, assures me that the first sentence in the above extract is substantially correct. The discontent, however, is caused not exactly by "the pressure put upon them to teach 'Scripture,'" but by the necessity imposed upon them to teach it in a fashion inconsistent with their own convictions. I will undertake to say that if permission to teach honestly what they believe about the Bible were given to Board school teachers, three-fourths of them, at the very least, would tell the children that the greater part of the Hexateuch must be regarded in the same light as a series of fairy tales; that the story of Jonah is a moral fable, very impressive in its way, but probably destitute of even a basis of fact; that the Book of Daniel is a romance, and that of Esther a political apologue. I believe, also, that, if they dared, the same proportion of teachers would treat nearly all the miracles of the Old Testament as originating in the imagination of Jewish patriots and poets, rather than in actual fact. Even if I put the proportion numerically too high, the most sanguine believer in the evangelical fervour inspired by our Training Colleges must surely feel that the letter above quoted is indicative of considerable mental unrest. Let the extent of Rationalism among teachers be minimised to the utmost possible degree consistent with notorious facts;

still it will remain true that a large number are forced into teaching what they do not believe.

Now, this is a sort of fact of which the moral import is not dependent on statistics. If only twenty per cent. of the men and women who stand before their classes with the Life of Abraham, or the account of the Deluge, or the story of the Exodus in their hands as the basis of moral instruction, hold these parts of the Bible to be unhistorical while they are obliged to treat them as solemn facts, it seems too like taking "a lie in their right hand" for the inculcation of truth. The misdirected satire of Jean Ingelow in ridiculing a theory of spiritual evolution which she did not understand would be much more applicable to the case of these teachers:—

"Gracious deceivers who have lifted us
Out of the slough where passed our unknown youth;
Beneficent liars who have gifted us
With sacred love of truth."

Human nature is too complex and unfathomable to allow of any sweeping affirmation of demoralising consequences in such a case. I was once asked by one of the best men I ever knew, himself an Anglican clergyman, why I did not seek orders in the Established Church. I replied that "for one reason I had never up to that moment seen any creed that I could sign." "Indeed!" he responded, "never seen the creed you could sign, hav'n't you? Well, now, *I* have never seen the creed I couldn't sign." Making all allowance for my friend's love of paradox, I yet could not but feel that between his notion of responsibility for assenting to a creed and mine there was an impassable difference. Yet I knew him to be in all other relations a man of

unimpeachable honour and courageously truthful. I should be very loth, therefore, to deny the possibility that analogous instances of personal paradox may be found among teachers who believe one thing and teach another. But the letter I have quoted above is sufficient proof that the position is a dangerous one.

Let it be granted that the moral degeneracy exhibited in that letter is an extreme and exceptional instance of the working of the system. Let it further be conceded that at the other end of the scale there are a number of sincere and devout Evangelical teachers whose Biblical creed is an inspiration to them. There will remain the large majority who belong neither to one class nor to the other. Pledged to no creed, possessed of culture enough to appreciate the revolution in educated opinion on the origins and authority of the Bible, they yet feel no special impulse to any independent study of such questions, and ordinary prudence warns them against any precipitancy in adopting ideas which would create a daily consciousness of discord between duty and conviction. The result is an attitude of conventional acquiescence which guards their mental comfort, but empties their Scriptural teaching of all reality. Some of the more studious among them, while shy of reading distinctly Rationalistic books, find much edification in the works of a contemporary school which suggest that after all there is nothing exactly true, and it does not much matter. Mr. A. J. Balfour's elegant disquisition on the duty of believing with the majority, or Mr. Percy Gardner's charming explanation in his *Exploratio Evangelica* of the possibility that a creed may be both true and false at the same time, have great attractions for honest men in such circumstances. Pretending

to their own consciences to adopt, though without legitimate authority or open avowal, a freedom which I have above suggested as their due if they are to teach the Bible at all, they tell the stories of the Old Testament without any pretence of discriminating fact from fiction even in their own minds. What does it matter? they ask. If they were telling the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, they would not feel it necessary to warn their infant hearers that beans do not, as a rule, produce stalks reaching up to heaven. The attitude of the child's mind towards such a narrative is, they well know, neither that of belief nor that of unbelief. It is simply that of interest and wonder at an unfolding vision. Why should the case be different with the story of Eve and the Serpent?

It is not for me to answer that question. The point of my whole argument is that, if Hebrew myth or legend is to be treated at all in State schools, they should be treated precisely in that manner. What I complain of is that they are not so treated, but rather as parts of a divine and infallible history. And the position is such that they cannot be otherwise treated, unless the children under instruction are expressly told so. This would be quite possible in Sunday-schools, even of orthodox churches, if liberal influences like those of Dr. Monro Gibson or Professor Rendel Harris happened to prevail there. But in no Board school is it at all possible, because the attempt would lead to theological discussion on the Board, and revive the religious difficulty in its most obnoxious form. The result is that teachers have to treat as solemn fact every Hebrew legend or impossible miracle read as a Scripture lesson. Those whom I have described above as receptive of modern

dissolving views, wherein historic falsehood shades off into spiritual truth, may flatter themselves that they are only giving a moral lesson through a parable. But the illusion is dissipated the moment that any intelligent pupil asks such critical questions as occur to precocious children. "Mother," asked a four-year-old *enfant terrible* whom I once knew, "what does God sit down on when he's tired?" "O, my dear," said the mother, "God is never tired." "But," retorted the child, "you said he rested on the seventh day."

Now critical questions of children are of no disadvantage whatever, if suggested by the inconsistencies of an avowed parable or fable. But any question of the kind may rudely dispel the rationalising teacher's notion, that he can use Hebrew myths as he uses Æsop's Fables without letting his pupils know it. If it be said that as a matter of fact such questions are rarely or never asked in school, so much the worse for the system. For the absence of any such sign of intelligent interest shows that the whole lesson is regarded as a ceremonial observance having no relation to realities. Besides, there are many cases in which an intelligent and rational teacher, who was really free, would anticipate such questions for the sake of the spiritual impression he is seeking to make. If, for instance, he is using the infatuated Pharaoh of the Exodus as a type of earthly power, scornful of spiritual verities, and eventually crushed by a might that it cannot understand, he must needs deny the literal truth of the assertion that "God hardened Pharaoh's heart"; or, otherwise, all modern analogies fail. To explain the arrogant contempt of George III. and his court for the new-born American patriotism, by asserting that God hardened that

monarch's heart, would not be tolerated even by literal believers of what is said about Pharaoh. It is, therefore, impossible for the teacher to make any obviously fair application of the ancient example to the modern instance.

Take, again, the alleged command given by Jahweh to Moses, Joshua, and Israel at large to smite the seven nations of old Palestine, and "utterly to destroy them," to "make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." Either this command is accepted as historical, or it is not. In the former case the teacher has an unenviable task in "justifying the ways of God to men." In the latter case, a conscientious teacher would almost give all his hopes of preferment to be allowed to say that the statement was a false and blasphemous pretence of the Israelites. But even here the recipients of dissolving views may find an issue. It may not be true that any personal Deity gave such a command. Yet the doctrine of the gradual selection of higher races through the survival of the fittest in each generation's struggle for life is in one form or another generally accepted; and, probably, the application of such a doctrine to the resettlement of ancient Palestine would not stir up "the religious difficulty" even on School Boards. But such an interpretation is estopped by the conditions under which the lesson is given. The "compromise" involves a tacit undertaking to assume, if not the infallibility, at least the historical accuracy of the Bible, especially where it narrates the successive steps in the progress of the alleged revelation to which all the compromising sects are at least officially committed. One of those steps is the establishment of the chosen people in Palestine, and the suppression of

the earlier inhabitants by order of a personal divine ruler in order to make room for them. This divine Ruler speaks with human speech, expresses emotions of anger and jealousy indistinguishable from human feeling. He issues orders like an earthly sovereign who has a policy of conquest to carry out. It is not Fate, or the Unknowable, who is here acting and speaking. It is an intensely personal Being, whose mercy elsewhere is said to endure for ever, and whose "compassions fail not." How is it possible for any honest Christian, with the words of Jesus murmuring in his heart, to tell children that such a Being ordered these massacres? Yet no Board schoolmaster would be supported by his Board in treating as fictitious the terrible command above-mentioned.

What reality can there be in the teaching of the Bible under such limitations by any man or woman touched by the spirit of the age? The possibility of simplicity and straightforwardness is confined to that small minority of teachers who still hold the whole Bible to be literally true. Unconscious of any incongruity between modern thought and the "plan of salvation" taught to them in their childhood, they are also untroubled by any inconsistency between Old Testament fables and the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. They tell, with such fervour as a cooling faith allows, of man's first disobedience, of the curse thereby entailed on all posterity, and of the elaborate process of miracle and prophecy, of type and sacrifice, of commandments and law and ceremony, by which a divine Being laboriously prepared the coming of the sacred victim, whose death and resurrection opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Such a course of instruction amidst all the array of theological

dreams it unfolds has, undoubtedly, lucid intervals in which moving appeals may be made to the heart. The loss of Eden, the passion of Cain, the aspirations of Enoch, the faith of Abraham, the story of Joseph, David's heart-broken sorrow for Absalom—all, even when taken literally, give the opportunity of contrasting the meanness of self-will with loyalty of soul to a divine ideal. But the possibility of this does not in the least palliate the wrong spoken of in previous pages, the injustice done to dissenting ratepayers and less orthodox teachers who object to do evil that good may come. They protest against being made aiders and abettors in the perpetuation of what they think falsehood, even though some moral truths may occasionally glimmer through it.

But outside the small minority, who can with their whole hearts "teach the Bible" in the sense intended by "the compromise," teachers are exposed to various degrees of strain varying from the abject surrender to hypocrisy quoted above, to casuistical ingenuities and non-natural interpretation of obvious duty. "Obvious duty" because neither by authority of ratepayers, nor by orders of a School Board, nor even at the request of parents, is any man justified in teaching to his pupils as truth what he himself believes to be a lie. "Parable," "allegory," "fable," and such like, are not the words to describe the method of one who teaches in one sense and takes care that the children shall understand him in another. To talk about a dispensation of "illusion" is all very well when we are groping after an increasing purpose running through the ages of faith. In those times everyone believed the illusion, and there was no dishonesty. But when a man tells of a universal

deluge, or of the overthrow of Jericho's walls by sound of trumpet, or of Joshua's arrest of the sun, in such a manner as to make the impression that he believes them as facts when he does not believe them, this is not an economy of illusion; it is a lie—or at least it would be so to any unsophisticated conscience.

VI.

THE EFFECT ON SCHOOL CHILDREN

SECTARIANISM has always professed to take a purer and warmer-hearted interest than the so-called "Secularists" in the moral and spiritual welfare of school children. In 1870 it was openly said that schools without the Bible would tend to make their pupils merely "clever devils," whereas the daily inculcation of Holy Scripture would make them "wise unto salvation." At the risk of needless reiteration, I must again disclaim any inclination to deny the educational value of the Bible if properly used. The question here raised is, whether the Bible as taught under the conditions already described is calculated to secure salvation from falsehood, insincerity, and formalism? But these vices freeze out the life of moral instruction, and paralyse all efforts to achieve any salvation worth the name. After thirty years of daily text-grinding in the people's schools, or rather after a hundred years of it if we take into consideration the previous work of voluntary associations, the question of Browning's Pope seems very pertinent:—

"Well, is the thing we see salvation?"

Is the language in our streets much purer or less profane and coarse than it was in 1870?

More than one local Council, in disgust at the coarse, foul, and disgusting words constantly used in its streets, has desired the law to be strengthened.

We have had practically universal and professedly compulsory education for more than thirty years—or, at least four generations of school children—and yet we have to ask the magistrates to supplement the moral work of the schoolmaster in a matter like this. The following paragraph from the *Westminster Gazette*, of September 6th, 1901, is very suggestive. The italics are my own :—

“We would gladly see the resolution passed by the East Ham Council to stop offensive language on tram-cars adopted by other local authorities. The use of language of this sort is disagreeable enough to many, wherever heard; it is particularly so on public conveyances where other passengers are compelled to listen to it. *The strange thing is that those who indulge in it are, as a rule, quite unconscious of giving any cause of offence. They are so accustomed among their fellows to express themselves in such a way that they go on doing so wherever they may be.* It will, no doubt, be possible to curb the nuisance by measures of the kind referred to; but, as the use of objectionable language anywhere is an offence at law, it might be well, perhaps, if the law were put in motion more frequently than it is. Persons passing along the streets often have their ears assailed with foul expressions, which a few prosecutions might make less common.”

Is it not a scandal that elementary schools should be so powerless to mould the manners of children who have attended them for six, eight, or ten years? All these foul-mouthed people, who “are so accustomed among their fellows to express themselves in such a way,” have passed through some elementary school in which the Bible, or even the Catechism, has been taught, and “explanations have been given therefrom in the principles of the Christian religion and morality.” And yet they have not been saved from coarseness, profanity, and indecency in speech.

Is the effect of cheap literature quite what we hoped and expected? When opening our first Board schools, did we forebode that in the twentieth century the cry of

"All the winners" would sell more papers than the most thrilling announcements of scientific or archæological discovery? In our incessant whining for clumsy methods of force to put down betting, bribery, and impurity is there not a manifest despair of moral remedies? The other day certain local newspapers reported penalties most justly inflicted at a police court on two Sunday-school teachers, convicted of wilful damage in a park courteously thrown open to excursionists by the Duke of Westminster. The case was brought before the magistrates only because incessant repetitions of the same sort of offence left no alternative but prosecution or exclusion of the public. It is some twenty-five years since Bradgate Park, in Leicestershire, had to be at least temporarily closed for a similar reason. But in the interval there does not seem to have been such improvement in popular manners as ought to have been effected if increased school attendance meant more general moral inspiration.¹ I gladly acknowledge that juvenile crime, in the sense of offences punished by sentence of magistrates or judges, has largely diminished. But this has been brought about by improvements in the law rather than in juvenile manners. Children who would, in a more barbarous though recent age, have been sent to prison are now sent to Industrial schools or Reformatories. That, however, is quite consistent with a persistently low standard of juvenile morality, and of this there is too much evidence.

¹ While revising these pages for the press I note in the *Manchester Guardian*, of August 19, 1901, that the closing of Plas Newydd, in Llangollen, is attributed to the behaviour of "trippers"; and that the ruins of Castell Dinas Bran will probably have to be shut up from the same cause.

It may be said that our failure to improve morals as fast as we increase knowledge condemns the churches as well as the schools. That is so. But in regard to the possibilities of amendment in the two cases there is this difference. The churches are much more free than the schools are to adapt their moral teaching to the needs of the time. Articles scheduled in an Act of Parliament, and even Trust Deeds deposited in a denominational Muniment Room, are no more effective than the handcuffs and bonds imposed on professors of the "box-trick," where there is the will to get rid of them. But the watchful jealousy of a School Board majority, elected for the purpose of guarding the sacred compromise, is not to be eluded. As a matter of fact, it is notorious that the churches are to a very considerable extent changing their methods of teaching. I have already given illustrations of the freer spirit which is gradually inspiring even Evangelical Sunday-schools. We may well hope, therefore, that in accordance with historic precedent the churches will insensibly shift the standard of orthodoxy. And, meantime, there is little temptation to insincerity. Whatever may be the case with ministers—among whom there is a great deal more moral heroism than is commonly supposed—Sunday-school teachers, at any rate, have no temptation to continue their work of Bible teaching for a single day after they find out that they cannot do so honestly. Besides, Sunday-schools do not compel us to pay rates for their support. They have no national or municipal authority at their back. They do not involve us as citizens in responsibility for their teaching or moral influence. Whatever may be said about the lingering fiction of a "national"

church, its Sunday-schools are entirely voluntary and unofficial.

The case of public elementary day schools is very different. Attendance at one or other of them is compulsory on some 84 per cent. of our children. We are forced to pay for their support through taxes and rates. It is by the national or municipal authority, or both, that every lesson in them is given. We are, therefore, responsible for them; and if they are allowed to demoralise the commonwealth of the future, it is our fault. Or, if they are maintained on a system proved to be inefficient in attaining the highest ends of education, every citizen is to blame. Further, the position of the elementary teacher is a much more difficult one than that of the Sunday-school teacher. To the former his work is also his livelihood. He cannot abandon it with a light heart the moment he is required to offend his conscience. Nor is there the slightest prospect at present of obtaining for him an honourable "liberty of prophesying." This would imperil that sacred ark of the covenant, "the compromise."

The result is that the Bible teaching in Public, Elementary, and especially in Board schools, is inevitably more demoralising than that of Sunday-schools. In the latter the worst evil to be feared is that of ignorance, or, perhaps, honest bigotry. But in the former the tendency of the system is to make dishonesty a necessity of life. Or if dishonesty be, considering all things, too harsh a word to use, the least evil that is possible is the prevalence of a lifeless formalism in precisely that part of school teaching which most of all requires the energy of an eternal spirit.

Only use and wont can account for the indifference with which the majority of School Board electors look on while the springs of morality are poisoned before their eyes. What does it matter? ask some. If the teaching is false, it means as little to the children as the drone of a beetle, and meantime the religious difficulty is avoided. It seems never to occur to such people that they are thus consenting parties to the waste of nearly one-fifth of a child's school time. How can such a system be anything but demoralising? Even the children from decent and respectable homes want waking up on moral subjects. Let it be granted that such children hear nothing but good at home. They hear it, however, in the form of kindly platitudes about "behaving" and doing as they are told, and honesty as the best policy—which platitudes are neither stimulative nor impressive. They require to be made to feel that the matter of conduct is interesting; and they will never be made to feel that by a teacher who explains the grammar and geography and archæology of a Bible story which he does not himself believe. The fate of those children—alas, too many—who have no decent homes to echo the platitudes of morality is far worse. It is simply shocking to hear little victims of society's crimes rattling off pious phrases and shrieking saintly hymns to which they obviously attach no meaning whatever. And if their teacher is compelled by his engagements to add to the falsehoods and unrealities of their young lives a lesson on a supernatural revelation which he does not himself believe, he becomes, like the parent, to Christ inconceivable, who, instead of a fish, would give to his child a scorpion.

Perhaps one reason for persistence in the present

system is that its most devout supporters do not regard morality as teachable, but expect it rather to be inspired by a miracle of divine grace. The instrument for the accomplishment of this *opus operatum* is the word of God, and the word of God is identified with the Bible. A magic charm is thought to lie in the syllables of the sacred text, like the influence once attributed to written spells—a charm altogether apart from any significance of the words. The same fond delusion which induces some well-meaning people to hang up texts in railway waiting rooms, or to employ sandwich-men to carry texts on their backs, is also at the root of much zeal for text-grinding in schools. If the Genesis story of the Fall of Man, or of the Flood, had been first given to the modern world by some learned excavator of cuneiform records, we should certainly have considered it extremely interesting, and in many ways suggestive of the attitude of early ages towards the mystery of life. As fables they might even have been recognised as useful for combining entertainment with instruction in the teaching of children. But no one would have dreamed of making them a formal basis of moral lessons. What is it, then, which gives such narratives their sacred and even awful importance? It is the feeling that they are parts of a divine "plan of salvation" which must stand or fall as a whole, and of which every separate part is essential to the miraculous power of the whole. The logical significance is not the point of importance, but rather the impact of a divine word.

Now there is certainly a grain of truth in the religious assumption that morality is not teachable in the same way as, for instance, arithmetic is teachable. When, in the latter case, the main relations of the

digit numbers are fixed in the memory, the rest is mere matter of combination, requiring only attention. But no amount of memory work or of combination of maxims will give morality. Here the working of the sympathies and the will are absolutely essential. How is this to be ensured? The Evangelical people who are the lifeguard of the School Board system hold that it depends on a miracle of grace, and a miraculous Bible is, in their view, the best, indeed the only means for evoking that. Now, I am not going to assert that, as regards this miracle of grace, they are fundamentally wrong. At any rate, I hold they are not so wrong as those who treat of human nature as though it were wholly and utterly isolated from and independent of the divine Whole in which it lives and moves and has its being. But this expectation of grace from the mere repetition of sacred spells is unworthy of the spiritual aspirations with which it is too often associated.

No; grace comes through human intercourse, and the more vivid, the more intimate, the more natural that intercourse is, the more probable is the transmission of grace. Apply this to teacher and pupils. The former is rightly expected to be the medium of a grace that touches the sympathies and moulds the wills of his pupils. But he can only discharge this function through free intercourse of mind and heart. How is that possible to him in the course of lessons which require him to pretend a mental attitude wholly alien to his real life? It is of no use to say that it ought not to be alien to his real life, or that he ought to be a sincere believer. There is nothing whatever in the engagement of a Board-school teacher to bind him to that, and, even if there were, the ideas of the

most sincere "believers" about the Bible are now very often indeed identical with those held by eminent unbelievers fifty years ago. But the Board-school system, the eternal "compromise," makes no allowance for this change. And the result is that really only a minority—and, I suspect, a very small minority—of such teachers feel entirely at ease and natural in giving a Scripture lesson.

How can a teacher, touched by the spirit of the age, feel at ease in teaching the life of Jesus to his class? He has, perhaps, been reading with sympathy and resistless conviction the article "Gospels" in the new *Encyclopædia Biblica*, a work edited and largely written by eminent clergymen of the Church of England. He finds that in the judgment of the writers of this particular article—a judgment founded on evidence he cannot resist—the Gospels are a growth, rather than the work of the men whose names they bear. For the reality of the miraculous events, including the resurrection, there seems to him now to be no evidence whatever of the nature usually demanded by modern historical science. And, indeed, nothing is left to him but a vision of transcendent beauty floating between earth and heaven, too pure for material solidity, and yet impossible of invention by any such minds as are reflected in the New Testament canon. The result probably is that he still keeps and still worships the Vision, as a transfiguration of a supreme manhood too great to be understood or rightly reported by disciples.

I am not writing a polemic nor yet an eirenicon. I am not, therefore, called upon to defend such a mental attitude as is here described. I only say that, in these times, it is one very natural to many who desire to

keep both reason and emotion true. And those who go through this experience, if they have the teaching faculty, are likely to be specially quickened by that experience. The very anxieties and "searchings of heart" they have suffered make them more sympathetic, and the spiritual heroism which prompts them to refuse the consolations of pretence gives a ring of sincerity to their utterance that tells upon children no less than on adults. But imagine such a man or woman set to give a lesson, according to the "compromise," on the alleged birth in Bethlehem, or the feeding of the five thousand, or the walking on the sea! He must treat such things as historic facts, and is afraid lest by any chance word he should betray his real position. He must expound the "fulfilments of prophecy" asserted by Matthew or Luke. He can hardly help giving travellers' tales of the Bethlehem cave which he regards as an imposture. If questioned on the precise mode of multiplication of the baked bread and cooked fishes that fed the five thousand, he can only reply feebly that these things are a mystery, when he holds them to be fiction. The great immeasurable soul of whom he has glimpses through the transfiguration wrought by the Gospels is reduced in his inevitable teaching to an itinerant wonder-monger, who puzzled the world by a sort of holy magic. Is it strange that religion, taught after such a fashion, should be morally barren?

It may be asked how would the position be improved by excluding the Bible? One answer is that the moral atmosphere in many schools would be purified by the elimination of unreality and insincerity. That such evils accompany the use of the Bible in school is not the fault of the book. It is a consequence of

the conventional superstition with which it is treated. But, so long as half the population regard it as divine and infallible, while the other half believe it to be a collection of human documents, each to be taken on its merits, it is impossible to ensure sincerity and honesty in its use. If ever a time comes when it can be used with the same sort of intelligent discrimination and freedom as is claimed by university Professors in teaching Cicero's *De Officiis* or Plato's *Republic*, it will become an exceedingly valuable handbook. But that time does not seem to be within a measurable distance now.

Another answer to the above question is that, if morality were taught as a part of our natural life dependent on human experience, and not on a miraculous revelation, the teacher would be more likely to bring his lessons home to the every-day life of his pupils. Which is the more likely to inspire a wholesome fear of lying—the story of Gehazi, or the account of a plague of small-pox which might have been stopped by the isolation of the first cases but for the lying denials of their relatives that there was anything wrong? In my time it was usual to tell children that “Don’t-care” met a lion, and was eaten up. The warning had not much influence; but the true story of a child who walked unwarily, and fell headlong down a flight of steps, induced, at any rate for a short time, some alertness in looking to the path before us.

It is no aspersion on the Bible to say that it cannot supply the place of systematic instruction in the morals of daily life. Listening to the “explanations given therefrom in the Christian religion and morality” by even the best elementary teachers, one cannot but

feel that the knowledge of Scripture is one thing and morality another. Both teacher and taught are for the moment affecting to live in another world entirely different from this, conducted on a different method, actuated by impossible motives, and continually corrected by miracle. The stories, the maxims, the doctrines, are items to be remembered for examinations. But they are none of them on the same plane as the child's daily life. The notion of any practical application rarely occurs, except as a preparation for death or a key to the dream-world of heaven.

In former years, when I was still a member of the School Board for London, and much nearer in creed to the Evangelical Free Churches than I am now, I was so impressed with the practical absence of systematic moral teaching from the schools that I called attention to the subject, and obtained the appointment of a small Committee to consider the question. One of the members was the late Rev. John Rodgers, Vicar of St. Thomas', Charterhouse, and at that time Vice-Chairman of the Board. My proposal was that a course of lessons should be based upon the summary of practical morality given by the Church Catechism in answer to the question, "What is thy duty towards thy neighbour?" I thought then, as I do still, that the summary is a very good one.¹

The highest classes in elementary schools are perhaps capable of receiving more definite instruction

¹ Among those who never learned this catechism a very curious mistake is prevalent. It is supposed to urge contentment with "that state of life unto which it *has pleased* God to call" us, whereas, of course, the words are, "to which it *shall please* God to call me." Also the word "betters" has been quite gratuitously taken to refer exclusively to social rank, whereas it refers just as naturally to moral worth.

on the origin, nature, and obligations of social relationships. But for children from seven to twelve years of age it contains just the sort of practical summary of duty, in the form of a "categorical imperative," that is adapted to their needs. Drawn out into a series of detailed lessons with ample illustrations, it would form an admirable basis for a course of moral instruction and exhortation likely to affect the life. In this conviction I went so far as to sketch the outline of such a course of lessons, which, I suppose, exists still somewhere in the archives of the Board. And, as it was grounded on the Catechism, I thought myself secure of support from Evangelical Churchmen. I am glad to remember that the Rev. John Rodgers supported me. But I was sadly disappointed in the more pronounced Evangelical laymen. One of them, a most excellent man, so far as that is possible to a member of a "straitest sect," and elected to the Board entirely on account of his religiousness, declared vehemently that "it left out everything that a Churchman cared for." It was useless to suggest that "everything a Churchman cared for" could be supplied in a Churchman's own Sunday schools. The very appearance of teaching morality for its own sake, apart from the magic, symbols, and formulas of theology, was considered suspicious, and the project had to be dropped.

The decision was regrettable; but, from the point of view fixed by the "compromise," it was perhaps inevitable. For both Churchmen and Nonconformists, having once established and endowed the Bible—and practically their common interpretation of the Bible—as the one sanction of morality recognised by the School Board, were naturally loth to imperil that

settlement by any admission of merely natural ethics. But, however that may be, surely the recent refusal of the same Board to allow children to be withdrawn in accordance with the Conscience Clause from Biblical instruction to receive moral lessons instead is indefensible. The facts are as follows.

A society known as the Moral Instruction League was formed some time ago to stimulate attention to moral teaching in schools, and to suggest what the members held to be better methods. Using a right which is presumably within the limits of the British Constitution, to influence their fellow-citizens by conversation, they visited the homes of parents having children in attendance at Board schools, and explained their ideas. They showed that by law the children could not be compelled to receive the regulation Bible teaching. They pointed to the article in the School Board Code which directs that "during the time of religious teaching or religious observance any children withdrawn from such teaching or observance shall receive separate instruction in secular subjects." They then suggested that the parents, if they preferred non-theological moral teaching, should withdraw their children from the Bible lessons, and at the same time request that they should, during the time of those lessons, receive separate teaching in morality. The suggestions were received by the parents with an unexpected amount of favour. As many as a hundred children, or more, were withdrawn from theological teaching in each of several schools. But so threatening a schism was met with prompt measures by the alarmed devotees of the compromise. In the first place, separate moral instruction was refused to the children withdrawn. Instead of that, they were set

to toil apart at ordinary school drudgery. Now, this appears to be a rather hard, and even cruel, interpretation of the School Board rule ; for it virtually refuses to recognise ethics as a "secular subject," and it forces upon unwilling parents the alternative of Bible or nothing. Under such circumstances, it is easy to understand the success of the next step taken by zealots for the compromise. The parents were visited in their homes, and the difficulty and unpleasantness of the situation created for their children were vigorously explained. The result has been, I believe, hitherto that the children returned to the Bible lessons ; and this will probably be adduced as evidence of the unanimous desire of parents of all creeds and none to have their children taught the common faith of Evangelical Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Independents.

It would have been more generous, and equally in accord with the School Board regulations, if the Board had consented to regard natural ethics as a "secular subject," and detailed teachers—who could easily have been found—to give the lessons to the children for whom they were asked. The refusal to do so suggests that the authorities were afraid of the experiment. Perhaps, like the authorities of Jewish orthodoxy at the first feeble beginnings of Christianity, "they doubted whereunto this would grow." But, after all, they are ministers of law, not of their own theological views ; and I cannot for a moment suppose that their legal advisers would have told them that a concession to these parents would be contrary to the law. There are some, especially among the clergy, who boldly maintain the right of every parent to have his children taught his own creed at the public expense. It is

noteworthy that these extremists belong to a Church which formerly resisted fiercely the imposition of a conscience clause, and which also refused to believe that any schools were necessary except her own. But, though the new view of the priesthood is certainly more Christian than their former opinions, it has the misfortune to be impracticable. Our sects are too many to allow this sort of liberality. But if ever there was a case in which parents were justified in asking to have their own views of moral instruction carried out, it is surely the case I have described. They did not want any eccentricities of morality to be taught. They would probably have been quite satisfied with the practical principles of conduct set forth in the Church Catechism, as above quoted. If Bible teaching can claim to be "unsectarian," how much more justly can the title be claimed for doctrines of morality from which not one in a million of the population would dissent! The refusal of their request was unreasonable, unjust, and ungenerous. That it would be sustained by a majority of electors zealous for the Bible even to persecution may, unhappily, be true. But it was not in the true interest of morality. It is of a piece with the policy which sets unbelievers to teach belief, and counts the conscience and heart of the teacher nothing so long as he speaks by the Book.

VII.

THE WRONG TO THE NATION

SECOND in importance to the disastrous effects of a hollow compromise on the teaching of morality is its injurious influence on the development of national education. In the United States and in our own greatest colonies there has been an almost complete elimination of the religious question. It is true that in the older settlements of Canada friction is kept up by the survival of Catholic claims and influence. It is true also that in the United States and in Australia occasional efforts have been made by devout sectaries to disturb the settlement effected by dropping theology. We know likewise that in many common schools of the United States the old custom is still kept up of reading from the teacher's desk at the commencement of school a few verses from the Bible "without note or comment." I am one of those who think that this comment of silence is worse than almost any other. The custom is a tribute to the survival of Puritan traditions in America. But the fact that, in spite of these traditions, the Americans have substantially left the teaching of the Bible and Christianity to the Churches is all the more creditable to their spiritual courage. At any rate, their practice affords no support whatever to the evangelical compromise in England. But these modifications of pure "secularism" have been almost a negligible

quantity. It is substantially—and excluding Catholic Canada—almost exactly true that the educational policy of Greater Anglo-Saxondom has been determined solely by educational interests, and not by sectarian rivalry. I recognise, of course, that other advantages besides this blessed peace have favoured our kinsmen beyond the seas, and especially in the United States. The absence of an Established Church, and the system of Common Schools, which merges all class interests in the one national and patriotic interest, have, of course, conduced to the same end. But even these happy features of the new commonwealths would have been ineffectual if the religious difficulty had not been excluded.

These commonwealths have not had to balance the claims of jealous sects. They have not had to repress the enterprise of heterodox school managers lest they should attract more scholars than the orthodox. They have not been tempted to minimise the number of school places needed in a district lest they should disturb sectarian monopolists who could not raise the money for enlargement. They have been privileged to consider two questions only: how many children required education, and what were the best methods of intellectual and moral culture. Whatever criticisms may be passed by our old-world scholars on the rawness of American culture, witnesses of indisputable competence—as for instance, the correspondents commissioned to gather information for the *Times* newspaper on American machine manufacture—are emphatic in their testimony that the commercial and scientific progress of the States is very largely owing to the facilities for education offered from the Common Schools upwards. No ecclesiastical traditions, no balancing

of sect against sect, not even "pious founders," have stood between the people and their intellectual aspirations. And this is not in the least because the American people are less bigoted than we. So far as we can judge, the puritanical traditions of the Pilgrim Fathers still exercise a widespread and enduring influence on American religion. But, whatever may be their various beliefs, they drop them at the school door, and ignore them in their educational counsels.

How different has been our experience in the old country! In 1807 the then Archbishop of Canterbury stamped out Mr. Samuel Whitbread's precocious scheme of national education with a pious appeal to prejudice, pleading for Christianity in the words of a heathen poet:—

"Hac casti maneant in religione nepotes."

From that day to this the decisive consideration in every education crisis has been not how to give our children the best possible training, but how to protect first the Established Church, and next the Bible. If the Nonconformists had not been false to their professed principles in 1870, a great part of the nation might then have adopted a wider policy which must ultimately have attracted the whole people. But at the golden opportunity their spiritual courage failed them. They dared not trust religion to the "voluntary principle" which they had invoked against the Established Church. They accepted State patronage and control for religion in the schools. Since that great betrayal every School Board election has been a theological battle. Questions of education have been quite secondary. How many candidates have given an hour during their canvas to the best methods of teaching to read, or the most interesting

modes of presenting the problems of arithmetic? The retention of the Bible, and the interpretation of "unsectarianism," or rather "intersectarianism," so as to include all evangelical doctrine, have been the two notes to which every platform has echoed.

In the battle of progress it is always good to fix upon some definite assertion of principle to be maintained at all costs. Supposing that principle to be chosen, as a successful general selects his point of attack, because it commands the field, victory on that point means a good deal more than the achievement of one item in a political programme. The success leavens the national mind with a new temper that suggests consequential steps of further advance. When Cobden and his associates in the Anti-Corn Law League fixed on the bread tax as their objective point of attack they were wise in their generation. The movement was the more speedily successful because concentrated on the least defensible position of Protectionists. But when once that point was yielded the whole case for Protection in general was practically given away; and the doctrine of customs dues for revenue alone was triumphant.

In 1870 the Nonconformists had it in their power to do for the emancipation of education what Cobden and Bright accomplished for freedom of trade in 1846. Their experience since the beginning of the nineteenth century might have taught them that sectarian domination, or sectarian rivalry, was hopelessly irreconcilable with freedom of educational development. Common sense dictated that the only effective way of removing the obstacle was to eliminate theology entirely from public elementary schools, and to relegate it to the free action of the churches in accordance

with the principles up to that date held by Nonconformists. The notion of any danger to religion from such a policy ought to have been dissipated by the splendid examples of the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. So obvious seemed the inference from such palpable facts that Mr. Gladstone himself anticipated a Nonconformist demand for a "secular" system.¹ Unfortunately he gave them credit for more faith in their own principles than they possessed. But if they had been courageous enough for consistency, tens of thousands of the generation then coming into the world would have been saved from the sectarian curse which has since blighted their education.

Let us observe what would have been gained by the exclusion of theology. In the first place there would have been a clear and definite assertion of religious equality in the schools. Where education is carried on under State patronage and control there are only two alternative methods of maintaining religious equality in the schools. The one is to teach every creed, and the other is to teach none. In a country where a very few great denominations hold the field, as in Germany² or Austria, the former plan is possible,

¹ He said so at a gathering of Nonconformist ministers at the house of the late Rev. Dr. Allon, when Mr. Forster's Bill was a subject of conversation. And his own feeling on the subject was more publicly shown when he characterised School-board religion as a "monstrosity." Authoritative denominational instruction he of course valued. But in schools where this was impossible he thought that limitation of the teaching to secular instruction was logically inevitable.

² We are sometimes pointed to the free, unhindered development of education in Germany as a proof of at least the harmlessness of a denominational system. But between Germany and England there are very pregnant differences which make any parallel impossible. Speaking generally, religious belief is not so much a matter of individual conviction among average Germans as with us. Not that they are less religious in sentiment. Possibly they are even more so.

or at least plausible, though even in such cases there are fragmentary sects who suffer wrong. "*De minimis non curat lex.*" In Scotland, also, practically the same system is possible, for Presbyterianism of one form or another is professed by nearly the whole population. In Ireland the bad traditions of Protestant supremacy have survived disestablishment; and education remains a battle-field. The attempt to teach the creeds of all is never satisfactory, even under the most favourable circumstances. But those cases in which it seems to be compatible with unrestricted freedom of educational development are explained by the fact that there is no desire for religious equality and no intersectarian jealousy—at least so far as the schools are concerned. They are cases of denominational supremacy by consent. Wrong is, of course, done to small minorities; but the champions of different creeds do not fight each other over the starved minds and souls of children. In England, however, the attempt to teach the creeds of all is obviously hopeless. And those Englands beyond sea which have inherited the conscientious sectarianism of the Motherland have wisely adopted the other alternative and teach the creed of none. Let us note the

because of their conventional indifference about creeds. But they have not generally that idea of the duty of individual conviction which generates our innumerable sects. Their confirmations and first communions are very much a matter of social routine like the "coming out" of girls, or the assumption of the modern substitute for the *toga virilis* by boys. To such a state of feeling rate-supported catechism and scripture are of no consequence, and this indifference makes sectarianism powerless for harm to the schools. Bismarck had some trouble with Catholic obscurantists; but he gave them short shrift. Who ever heard of a German district being stinted of school places to soothe the jealousy of the Reformed or the Evangelical Church, or of a school generation being allowed to grow up in ignorance in order that the Catholics might have time to supply the needed school places?

consequences of our perverse attempt at an impossibility.

Although the so-called "compromise"¹ was devised and carried by a Churchman, he was what in the vulgar language of controversy is called a "Low Evangelical," and, though one of the excellent of the earth, he would be considered in ecclesiastical circles as little better than a Dissenter. His evident desire to have evangelical Sunday-school teaching introduced into Board schools appealed to the weak brethren among Nonconformists. They thus gained the doubtful advantage of endowment for their common gospel. But they inflicted a grievance on Churchmen which it is impossible to explain away. For the genuine Anglican view of Christianity differs from the united Nonconformist view. And it differs from it in such a way that if you teach the Nonconformist view you necessarily prejudice the pupils against the Church view, although you may say nothing about it. Nonconformists are content with the Bible, and the Bible alone. Churchmen desire, also, the catechism authorised by their Church. Nonconformists are satisfied if such explanations of Scripture are given as will set forth "the plan of salvation," meaning thereby the evangelical view of the Fall, the types of Christ in Jewish history and ritual, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and justification by faith. Churchmen, on the other hand, attach great importance to the creeds and sacraments, and are naturally jealous of any School Board teaching which tends to represent the former

¹ The resolution of the late Mr. W. H. Smith was adopted with slight modifications by so many School Boards that the case of London is typical of all.

as sufficient without the latter. That this is actually the tendency of School-Board religion can hardly with fairness be denied.

I think, then, that Churchmen had, and still have, a grievance under the School Board system. But the policy they have pursued to secure its removal or diminution has been a blight on the education of the country. They have resisted the building of Board schools that were urgently needed. They have insisted on keeping children in crowded and stifling rooms rather than share with a Board the work of supplying education. They have stigmatised as "unfair competition" the endeavour of School Boards to spend their larger resources on giving the children of ratepayers a higher education than the sects could give them. They resisted low fees and still more free schools as long as they could, and when their opposition was bought out by the fee grant they managed to retain a power of exacting special fees in addition and railed against every attempt of School Boards to rid education of such vexatious hindrances.

Their influence with Parliament is enormous, and must continue to be so while the choice of electors is practically limited to a small class of moneyed men naturally susceptible to social glamour. Indeed, that influence is resistless except during the brief moments when what Edward Miall used to call "some great blazing principle" concentrates popular attention. Such a principle was victorious when Church rates were abolished, and when the Protestant Episcopal Church in Ireland was disestablished. Such a principle might have been found in a real religious equality for the schools. But the endowment of the united evangelical sects provided nothing of the kind. It

made all Nonconformist appeals to justice hollow and feeble, while it put a weapon into the hands of Church men which they would not otherwise have possessed. The result has been a course of reactionary legislation, the purpose of which has been to restore ecclesiastical control, while its inevitable effect has been to obstruct and blight educational progress.

Lord Sandon's Act of 1876 was very plausible in its creation of school attendance committees, and in its abolition of the 25th clause of Mr. Forster's Act, which had allowed School Boards to pay fees for children in sectarian schools. But the substitution of payment of such fees by the Guardians out of the poor rate for payment by School Boards out of the school rate showed Lord Sandon's estimate of the Nonconformist conscience. The thing remained, but the name was changed, and that was enough. In its creation of the school attendance committees, in its repeal of the 97th clause of Mr. Forster's Act,¹ in its specious grant to destitute districts, in its provision for the dissolution of School Boards, and in its creation of those very doubtful institutions, "day industrial schools,"² it was a reactionary and dangerous measure.

¹ Requiring that the fees *plus* voluntary subscriptions should equal the Parliamentary grant in the case of denominational schools.

² Doubtful, because every child, unless disqualified by mental or bodily disease, or proved to be under influences inevitably tending to crime, has a right to a place in the common schools of the nation. And the excepted classes require a sort of day and night supervision which day industrial schools cannot supply. The proper discipline for dirty and neglected children is not to herd them with other dirty and neglected children, but to get them to come clean among clean children. The experience of the School Board for London has shown that this can be done. The wretched little scarecrows haunting the streets of my native city, where day industrial schools were thought a grand discovery, is a lesson on the other side. The late Benjamin Lucraft, in his venerable age, strenuously resisted the adoption of the

But this was only the first step of reaction. The Education Department, now the Board of Education, taking advantage of the facilities offered by successive Tory Parliaments for enlarging sectarian privilege under the Code, have abolished the "17s. 6d. limit," and offered such other advantages to denominational schools that they can now be carried on with very slight voluntary subscriptions, or even with none at all. The advances made by School Boards towards a higher education have been viewed by "the powers that be" with suspicion and dislike. The Cockerton Judgment was, of course, an impartial pronouncement of law. But the manner in which the emergency thus created has been met by the Government is a clear revelation of the envy and hatred with which a too democratic education is regarded by ecclesiastically-minded statesmen. School Boards are humiliated because they have done their work too well. The permanent mutilation of their powers now threatened will create an arbitrary break in the final stage of the only education possible to Board School pupils. Parents are often quite willing to keep a boy of fourteen a year longer at the school which he has been attending. But removal to a secondary school will be in most cases impossible, because of the fees; and even if that difficulty were met by a scholarship, the total break-up of former connections and the formation of new ones, to say nothing of the passage of an entrance examination, require an effort scarcely repaid by some nine months under an entirely new and unappreciated system. The result must be that many thousands of

system by the School Board for London. He regarded it as a counsel of despair suggested by ecclesiastical misinterpretation of the words, "The poor ye have always with you."

boys will lose their last chance of continuing their school education, and will swell the ranks of ignorance and incompetence which embarrass us in our competition with better-instructed nations. But the one gain which, in the view of our rulers, compensates us for loss of training, loss of trade, and loss of our commercial supremacy, is the retention of the Church as "the predominant partner" in national education.

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."

VIII.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

AN incident that occurred toward the end of the Parliamentary session of 1901 gives pointed illustration to the mischiefs caused by the religious difficulty. Though said to be laid to rest by "the compromise," this difficulty has an exhaustless faculty of resurrection, and always reappears when most unexpected and most inconvenient. The School Board for London has every year a Bill in Parliament conferring on it power to secure the additional school places required by an always increasing population. In this year (1901) the Board required twenty-nine new sites, and the necessary Bill had passed through Committee. But before it was reported local opposition to a particular site in Stepney attracted the attention of influential Members of Parliament, who are also prominent in the counsels of the Religious Education Union. That these gentlemen are, according to such light as they have on the subject, friends of education is proved by their interest in that Union. But the evil wrought by a misinterpretation of the interests of religion is shown by the eagerness with which Lord Hugh Cecil and his friends seized upon a possible opportunity of wrecking this Bill at a moment when every Parliamentary day was of consequence. They succeeded in getting it referred back to Committee, and if the case against a particular school site had

been even plausible, they might have thrown out the Bill and robbed some thousands of children of education during another year. Happily the opposition on this fresh inquisition proved to have no case at all, and the Bill was sent on unmutated for its third reading.

Now the Religious Education Union can hardly be supposed to have cared much about the grounds for local opposition to the disputed site. That opposition appears to have been based entirely on a desire to protect a site eligible for other purposes, and to force on the Board a site less generally desirable. Such considerations could have no interest for the Parliamentary representatives of the Religious Education Union. But they saw an opportunity of damaging the hated School Board system, and they seized upon it because in their view every delay would be advantageous to the reviving denominational system. I do not forget that they had a Parliamentary plea in defence of their interference at the last moment. A promise made to them by Sir John Gorst to secure consideration of their point had, it appears, slipped his memory, and accordingly they had him in their power. But they would hardly have made so much of the forgotten promise if they had not believed the sacred interests of religion to be at stake.

This case is typical of the working of the religious difficulty throughout a century of educational history. Those who have made most use of it have generally been friends of education according to their understanding of it. But they have attached such a predominant and enormous importance to theological and ecclesiastical influence that they have thought themselves to be doing God service if they could